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Hafa Adai!

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1 pleads guilty in scheme to bring illegal aliens to Guam

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

One of four men involved in a scheme to transport illegal aliens to Guam has changed his initial plea and has now pleaded guilty to the charges against him.

Lee Jesse Omar Reyes went before U.S. District Court for the NMI Magistrate Judge Heather Kennedy yesterday for a change of plea hearing in a case that also involves three others. The group, in this case, is accused of scheming to transport undocumented Chinese nationals to Guam from Saipan by boat.

At the hearing, Reyes told the court that he had read and understood what it means to change his plea. Still, Reyes said, he wants to enter a guilty

See ALIENS on Page 4

Laniyo tops SINMI's 'Live Your Dream' contest

Davilynn Varry Laniyo was named this year's top winner of the "Live Your Dream" contest of the Soroptimist International Northern Mariana Islands.

The contest, which aims to support women in the CNMI, had a total of 23

See LANIYO on Page 4

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Davilynn Varry Laniyo, front row, second from left, poses with other winners and Soroptimist International Northern Mariana Islands members during the awarding ceremony for the "Live Your Dream" contest last Saturday night at Charley's Cabaret at the Pacific Islands Club Saipan. The other awardees are Reinalynn Attao, front row, third from left, first runner up; Vertilia Camacho Cabrera, front row, fourth from left, second runner up; and Christy Joy Aldan, front row, fifth from left, third runner up. Others in photo are, first row, from left, Maureen Sebangiol, SINMI president, Marilyn Marron, Suzy Perez, and SINMI treasurer Merle Byrd. Second row from left, Tania David, SINMI president-elect; Yijia Zhao, SINMI secretary; Donna Krum; Joann Aquino; Tatian Ilmova; and Anastasia Shamanaeva.

DeLeon Guerrero: Delegate bid is an option

» Senate president re-examines 'fueled relentless animosities'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) confirmed Monday night that she is indeed leaving the NMI Democratic Party and that a bid to run as the CNMI's delegate in the U.S. Congress this November is an option being considered.

In response to *Saipan Tribune*'s question if she is seeking re-election,

See DELEGATE on Page 4

DeLeon Guerrero

APIPA team gives OPA its highest rating

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

A team of auditors from the Association of the Pacific Islands Public Auditors has determined based on their peer review that the CNMI Office of the Public Auditor is in full compliance with Government Auditing Standards for the period from Oct. 1, 2020, to Sept. 30, 2023.

Full compliance is the highest of three possible ratings issued in the external control review.

Manuel L. San Jose Jr., who is

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Local

Santos seeks Senate support to enable DPL to tap $1M settlement

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Public Lands Secretary Teresita A. Santos is seeking Senate support in amending the budget law so the department can tap the $1 million that DPL got as settlement payment in a civil case involving Kan Pacific and Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC.

Santos disclosed that the Department of Public Lands intends to use that money for "strategic and essential purposes," hence the need to amend the Appropriation and Budget Authority Act of 2024.

Santos said DPL is proposing to use $365,000 buy a vessel for the Managaha Island rangers; $35,000 to purchase a new vehicle for field operations; $200,000 for land use plan development; and $100,000 for surveying work on Rota and Tinian. That's for a total of $700,000. As for the remaining $300,000, Santos said it will be remitted to MPLT.

Santos' request letter was dated last Friday. She submitted it to Senate Vice President Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota), who also chairs the Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee. The Senate received the request on Monday.

She said in the letter that the request represents a "judicious and necessary" investment in the stewardship of the CNMI's public lands.

"It reflects our commitment to sustainable development, regulatory compliance, and operational excellence," Santos said.

The secretary said the $365,000 is immediately needed in order for their Compliance Division to buy a vessel for their Managaha rangers. She said the vessel is a critical asset due to the rapid deterioration of their current fleet.

Santos added that this allocation will support vital operational needs on Managaha and at the former Kan Pacific property in Marpi.

As for the $35,000 needed to buy a new vehicle, she said this investment for the Secretary's Office will substantially enhance their field operations and executive mobility, ensuring efficient and timely execution of duties. The secretary said their operation efficacy is currently hindered by a limited fleet.

Regarding the $200,000 for land use plan development, Santos said a pivotal allocation of such amount is required for the review of their land use plan. She said this foundational document will guide the equitable and sustainable use of the CNMI's public lands, forming the basis of future land management strategies.

On the $100,000 for surveying work on Rota and Tinian, Santos said it is critical to the planning and development of their homestead subdivisions. She said this endeavor is central to DPL's mission to promote sustainable development.

"This investment covers all associated expenses, ensuring comprehensive and effective surveying activities," the secretary said.

In compliance with the Commonwealth Code and considering the provisions of Article 11 of the CNMI Constitution, Santos said they anticipate transferring a portion of the settlement to MPLT by the end of the fiscal year.

She pointed out that this transfer is not only a statutory obligation but also a reflection of their commitment to responsible stewardship and the enhancement of CNMI's public and resources.

DPL got the $1 million as a settlement payment in the Commonwealth's claims and cross-claims against Kan Pacific and Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC based on U.S. antitrust laws and the Commonwealth's unfair business laws, raised in a 2015 case in which DPL was a defendant.

Last Dec. 27, MPLT, through counsel Robert T. Torres, asked the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the Public Auditor to investigate DPL for its alleged continuing withholding of net land lease funds and failure to remit the funds to MPLT. The failure to remit the $1 million settlement money was among those cited in the MPLT complaint.

Last Jan. 9, Santos provided the OPA with information that, according to her, will assist OPA and the OAG in their investigation on each of the six issues the MPLT board had complained against DPL. Santos said such information renders moot the MPLT trustees' complaint against DPL.

GAC FILTRATION SYSTEM FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Acting Commonwealth Utilities Corp. chief engineer Larry Manacop explains CUC's federally funded $2.1-million Isley Field and Obyan Wells Granulated Activated Carbon Filtration System Construction Project during the project's groundbreaking ceremony in Isley Field last Friday. Also in the photo, seated from left, are acting CUC executive director Betty G. Terlaje, CUC board chair Janice A. Tenorio, CUC deputy executive director for water and water Kevin Watson, Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang, and Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality chief engineer/safe drinking water manager Travis Spaeth.

Mayor works to unify groups to create safer, cleaner Saipan

CHRYSTAL MARINO

Fifteen of the 17 cultural leaders representing the diverse cultures on Saipan smile for a photo with Saipan Mayor Ramon Blas "RB" Camacho at his office in Susupe last Friday.

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
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CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to curb crime and beautify Saipan, Mayor Ramon Blas "RB" Camacho recently met with 17 leaders representing the diverse ethnic groups on island to discuss possible solutions and methods that they can do together to promote a "safe community, safe villages and a clean island."

The meeting, held last Friday afternoon at the Saipan Mayor's Office in Susupe, was attended by representatives from the Chamorro Association, Carolinian Affairs Office, the United Filipino Organization, Bangladeshi Cultural Group, the Palau Community Association, Thailand Community Association, the Japanese Consulate, Chinese Association, and the Korean and Chuukese communities.

"As the mayor for this municipality, I want to establish a connection …" said Camacho, expressing his desire to work with all ethnic groups.

He highlighted the crimes and problems plaguing villages. "The police cannot handle it themselves. Where are the resources here on our island? The community."

Camacho discussed the importance of keeping the island clean and his office's efforts in doing that, and one of the ways is through the Adopt-a-Place program.

Camacho said a willing ethnic group could adopt a place and place it under the care of that group.

He also shared plans of kickstarting town hall meetings and after-school recreational sports in which he hopes to see diverse communities involved.

Along with these plans, the mayor said he hopes to establish a cultural type of festival where the different ethnic groups on Saipan can come together and share their culture and food with one another. Should these plans come to pass, he proposes to have the event at the Sugar King Park

CHRYSTAL MARINO

Discussing community issues and possible solutions, several ethnic group leaders met with Saipan Mayor Ramon Blas "RB" Camacho at his office in Susupe last Friday.

"A booth for the Chuukese, a booth for the Chinese, a booth for the Bangladeshi to promote their cultures…. Let's promote each other," he said.

As for funding, the group agreed that establishing a non-profit organization is ideal.

Sharing his experience in soliciting funding—whether through grant writing, inquiring from private businesses, or leveraging educational tax credit, local advocate John Bolis Gonzales said that one source of funding could be the CNMI Office of Grants Management.

Gonzales said non-profit organizations can also help fund cultural projects.

"I think it would also be very, very beneficial that we form a non-profit organization, so that way companies and people will be able to gladly donate," he said. "And that way it's transparent."

The representatives also shared concerns about neglected public park restrooms, neighborhood crime, and excessive trash in the ocean and on land.

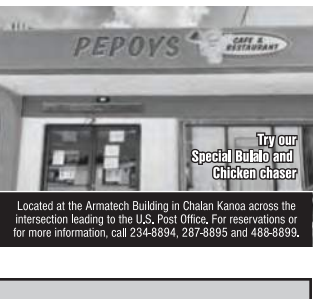
Palau Community Association's Ian Otobed shared that, although Saipan is beautiful and has many historic sites, he is concerned about the trash that litters many sites in the northern part of the island.

"An example is...the cliff lines," Otobed said. "…The cliff line from south to north is littered with trash. These are not marine debris. We know the difference between marine debris and people's trash. And these are from the guys who fish on the cliffs. We've caught them many, many times and we've warned them and we've continued to pick up trash and it continues to happen."

CAO executive assistant Felix Nogis cited a document provided by the mayor that indicated that there were 948 open cases before the Department of Public Safety in Garapan alone. With a total of over 4,400 open cases on Saipan, he wonders if homelessness and drugs is a factor.

"If that's one of the major things affecting our community now, I hope that whatever effort is developed by this group will address those issues," Nogis said.

The group agreed to work with the mayor in not creating a non-profit diverse group and come up with ideas, collaborative efforts, and solutions to better help the CNMI.



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OAG subpoena vs. ex-company officer's bank records stayed

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Superior Court has granted a stay on the subpoena issued by the Office of the Attorney General that would have required Abelina Mendiola to provide the OAG with her bank records.

Last week, Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho granted Mendiola's request for a temporary restraining order staying the OAG's enforcement of a subpoena against her bank records and information.

Mendiola, who is a businesswoman on Rota, is currently principal of DFS Enterprise and is a former president of Luta Mermaid LLC.

According to Camacho's order, a TRO is warranted because Mendiola would face irreparable harm if the information is released.

In addition, Camacho said the OAG will not suffer any harm if the requested information is not released pending full and proper determination of the merits of its petition.

Camacho set an evidentiary hearing on Feb. 15.

This arises from an OAG application for a subpoena duces tecum, or Subpoena 1, in the Superior Court that was to be issued to the custodian of records of the Bank of Guam. The application was filed on or about Dec. 27, 2023.

On Dec. 27, 2023, the clerk issued a subpoena duces tecum pursuant to the OAG's application.

On or about Jan. 19, 2024, the OAG applied for another subpoena duces tecum, or Subpoena 2, to be issued to the custodian of records of the Bank of Guam.

Both subpoenas also requested the plaintiff to provide all Bank of Guam records and transaction records, including account applications, deposit slips, withdrawal slips, wire transfer transactions, ATM and/or credit card transactions, cashier's checks, copies of all checks drawn from all accounts, and bank statements for Mendiola's accounts from January 2021 to the present, including records of if and when the account was closed and the reason why the account was closed.

Mendiola, through attorney Keith Chambers, asked the court to issue a preliminary injunction preventing the OAG and the CNMI from enforcing the subpoenas until such time that the court has ruled on the merits of her complaint for declaratory judgment and injunctive relief in the same case.

Mendiola also filed two separate civil complaints against the OAG for the subpoenas issued against her.

Due to winds, NWS cautions against rapid spread of fire

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
With the anticipated winds the next few days, the fire danger is very high and a red flag warning is in effect.

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The National Weather Service in Guam has issued its weekly regional weather outlook and reports that the Marianas is expected to see an increase in gusty trade winds throughout the week, which could potentially lead to a rapid spread of fires.

According to NWS, winds and waves will be the primary concerns for the week ahead for the entire Micronesia region.

"More immediately, for the Marianas, Yap and Palau, a descending shear line will bring rising choppy seas dominated by a shorter-period northeast swell and wind waves and a longer-period north swell. The shear line (narrow band of cloudiness) will slowly drop into the lower Marianas, bringing increasing cloudiness and patchy showers, though accumulation will be sight," said NWS.

Because of the increase in trade winds, NWS warns that fire will spread more quickly and could be a concern.

"Fire concerns will be elevated due to the stronger, gusty trades and low potential for wetting rains. With the anticipated winds the next few days, the fire danger is very high and a red flag warning is in effect," said NWS.

However, these concerns will shift east starting Thursday.

"Thursday, Friday, and into the weekend, the marine concern shifts to east Micronesia. Strong northerly winds associated with an east-moving storm well north of Wake Island will generate large northerly swell that will likely reach the Wake Island area Wednesday, then continue southward between Thursday evening and Friday morning. Folks on exposed north-facing islands and atolls should be aware of the changing sea conditions later this week and the potential for some inundation," NWS states.

The Marianas and the rest of Micronesia is encouraged to keep up to date on all the marine and surf advisories for the region.

APIPA

From page 1

the public auditor of the Chuuk State and was group leader of the APIPA team, informed Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) in a letter yesterday of the result of their review.

Organizations that undergo this audit can receive a rating of "pass," "pass with deficiencies," or "fail." San Jose said the CNMI OPA received a rating of "pass."

It was learned in San Jose's letter that external quality control reviews of all offices issuing audit reports guided by Government Auditing Standards are required at least every three years.

Because of this requirement, the CNMI OPA initiated and contracted with APIPA to do the external audit.

San Jose also informed CNMI temporary public auditor Dora I. Deleon Guerrero yesterday that they reviewed the internal quality control of OPA and tested its internal quality control system to determine whether it is adequately designed and operating effectively to provide reasonable assurance of compliance with the GAS, as issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and all its legal and regulatory requirements.

Due to variances in individual performance and judgment, San Jose said that compliance does not imply adherence to standards in every case but does imply adherence in most situations.

Further, he said, based on the results of their review, it is their opinion that the CNMI OPA's internal quality control system is adequately designed and is operating effectively to provide reasonable assurance of compliance with GAS and applicable legal and regulatory requirements for audit engagements during that period.

In accordance with GAS peer-review requirements, the team of auditors followed the standards and guidelines contained in the Peer Review Guide by the APIPA.

DELEGATE

From page 1

DeLeon Guerrero said she is still seeking guidance from friends and families on her options.

If she does run this Nov. 5, whether for re-election or for another post, it will be as an independent candidate, DeLeon Guerrero said.

This is the last year of DeLeon Guerrero's first four-year term as a senator.

The NMI Democratic Party had announced Monday that DeLeon Guerrero, who ran as a Democrat and made history as the first woman to serve as Senate president, had informed the party's chairman, Jonathan Cabrera, that she will be leaving the party after her current term ends.

When asked for comments about the Democratic Party's disclosure that she is leaving, DeLeon Guerrero said much has happened that made her revisit the principles that she stands on and re-examine the "fueled relentless animosities."

"I felt it best that I remove myself from such and choose to remain focused on my promise to work for and in the best interest of the CNMI and its people," she said.

The Senate president said her respect for the Democratic Party officers in their personal or official capacities will always be there, "most especially the supporters that gave me the honor to represent their interests and this I have not wavered from."

Rep. Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan) recently announced his candidacy for the delegate position under the NMI Democratic Party.

ALIENS

From page 1

plea to one count of conspiracy to transport illegal aliens.

Kennedy found Reyes fully competent to enter a knowing and voluntary plea and said she would recommend to U.S. District Court Chief Judge Ramona Manglona to accept the plea.

U.S. Probation Officer Juannette David-Atalig also appeared at the hearing, and reported that Lee failed to show up for drug testing on Feb. 12.

Despite this, David-Atalig recommends that Lee be allowed to be out, but be required to self-refer for substance abuse treatment.

Kennedy, upholding a previous court order modifying the conditions of Reyes' release, granted David-Atalig's request.

Reyes remains out of custody pending sentencing.

Reyes' co-defendants in this case are Yan Juan Hu Taitano, Ramon Jose Quitano Sablan, and Maverick Ryan Iguel Marlik.

The three remaining defendants have pleaded not guilty to the charges filed against them during a previous hearing.

According to the indictment, beginning in or about June 2023, Taitano and Reyes orchestrated a plan to transport a group of nine Chinese nationals from the Northern Mariana Islands to Guam.

To carry out the plan, Taitano and Reyes allegedly hired Sablan and Marlik to captain a small motorboat from Smiling Cove Marina on Saipan to Guam on or about July 9, 2023.

All nine Chinese nationals have been charged separately and have already pleaded guilty.

According to the indictment, the Chinese nationals agreed to pay Taitano and Reyes up to $5,000 per individual.

"On or about July 9, 2023, the defendants arranged for the boat to pick up the Chinese nationals at Smiling Cove Marina with the goal of transporting [them] to Guam. The Chinese nationals met Taitano and Reyes on at least two occasions to make down-payments; part of which… Taitano and Reyes used to purchase the motorboat that was to be used for the trip," the indictment stated.

"The boat departed Smiling Cove Marina at approximately 9pm with…Sablan and Marlik as well as the nine Chinese national passengers on board. The boat proceeded south toward… Guam," said the indictment.

However, en route, the boat ran out of fuel and began to drift just before it reached the island of Rota. They all had to be rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard.

LANIYO

From page 1

applicants this year and SINMI was able to give a total of $3,500 to four of the women who got the highest scores.

The other awardees are Reinalynn Attao, first runner up; Vertilia Camacho Cabrera, second runner up; and Christy Joy Aldan, third runner up.

This year's Live Your Dream awarding took place last Saturday night at Charley's Cabaret at the Pacific Islands Club Saipan.

The grant award goes to a woman pursuing her undergraduate or trades degree, is the financial head of the household and can demonstrate a financial need in order to be able to continue to pursue her educational dream. ***(PR)***

KHS JROTC program receives Gold Star Accreditation

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Eighth Brigade inspector Mark Pratt, accompanied by Kagman High School principal Benjamin Jones, poses with officers and cadets of the Kagman High JROTC Ayuyu Battalion.

The Kagman High School's Ayuyu Battalion earned the Honor Unit of Distinction (Gold Star) last Feb. 5, 2024, marking a significant achievement in their first Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps' Program of Accreditation since 2017.

With an impressive overall score of 97.7%, the Ayuyu Battalion showcased unparalleled dedication and proficiency in leadership, citizenship, and academic excellence. Under the guidance of their instructors, the cadets have exemplified the core values of the JROTC program, demonstrating integrity, service, and excellence.

The Ayuyu Battalion earned the highest score in the JROTC Program of Accreditation in all of the High Schools located in Guam, Saipan, and Tinian.

This event was evaluated by Mark Pratt, who is the JROTC inspector from Fort Lewis in Washington State. He was accompanied by KHS principal Benjamin Jones.

Achieving the Honor Unit of Distinction status required the collective effort of cadets, instructors, school administrators, and the wider community.

Through rigorous training, community service initiatives, academic pursuits, and countless hours of dedication the Kagman High JROTC Ayuyu Battalion surpassed the stringent criteria set by the JROTC Program of Accreditation. Their exceptional score of 97.7 reflects their unwavering commitment to maintaining the highest standards of excellence in all aspects of JROTC training and education.

As they celebrate this remarkable achievement, the Kagman High JROTC Ayuyu Battalion remains dedicated to serving their school, community, and nation with honor and distinction. This recognition not only highlights their past successes but also sets the stage for continued excellence in the years to come. Congratulations to the cadets, instructors, and supporters of the Kagman High JROTC Ayuyu Battalion on this well-deserved honor! ***(PR)***

FIRST GUAM VISIT U.S. NATIONAL GUARD/MARK SCOTT

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael R. Weimer visits with soldiers of Task Force Talon, Guam, Feb. 7, 2023. Talon is composed of both active duty and Guard soldiers from the 38th Air Defense Artillery and Guam National Guard, respectively, and operates the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system in Guam.

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PROCUREMENT SERVICES

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SUBMISSION DATE: MARCH 14, 2024 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

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"(B) LEASE OF ONE (1) CLASS 'E' VEHICLE"

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QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, TECHINICAL SERVICES DIVISION BY MARCH 6, 2024, TO MR. KENN ALDAN VIA EMAIL AT kla@dpwtsd@gmail.com

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

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/S/ RAY N. YUMUL
SECRETARY, DPW

/S/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.
Acting Director, Division of Procurement Services

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-015

A-16 SEWER LIFT STATION UPGRADE

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the construction of the A-16 Sewer Lift Station Upgrade project in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of the installation of a new polymer pre-cast concrete wet well to replace the existing A-16 wet well; installation of OFCI submersible pumps and accessories; new aboveground valve station and appurtenances with concrete pad; installation of new bar screen to replace existing A-1 bar screen; rehabilitation of existing A-16 bar screen; installation of new gravity sewer mains and manholes; installation of H2S controls; reconnection to existing lift station force main; procurement of a portable pumping system with trailer and concrete pad; installation of temporary bypass pumping operations and dewatering; site improvements with new chain-link fence, two vehicular gates and a pedestrian gate; asphaltic concrete pavement driveways with partial compacted base course area; installation of new and replacement of existing gate valves; demolition of existing minor structures and electrical upgrade. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system. CUC requires the Project to be completed in **Two Hundred Seventy (270) calendar days** from date of award of contract.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **February 27, 2024 at 10:00 AM (CHST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-24-015, A-16 SEWER LIFT STATION UPGRADE"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (CHST) March 14, 2024**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A *Bid Guarantee* of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States, Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidder. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 (ChST) on March 1, 2024** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Ms. Nicolette Villagomez, CUC's Water/Wastewater Engineer – via email at nicolette.villagomez@cucgov.org, and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email at christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

UPLIFTING MESSAGES

CHCC

Employees of the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. hold up the 19 letters that members of the Saipan Southern High School's National Honor Society have written for the hospital's patients, in a heartwarming display of compassion that's intended to provide uplifting messages to patients. "These heartfelt letters, a testament to the empathy and kindness of the student body, are destined to bring solace and encouragement to those undergoing various medical treatments at CHCC," said the corporation in a news release yesterday.

SBDC sets free CyberTech summit this March

The Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands' Small Business Development Center Network announced yesterday the upcoming 2024 Friends of Business Summit: Cybertech Edition, a pioneering event in collaboration with the Northern Marianas College's Office of Information Technology. This one-day summit will take place on Thursday, April 4, 2024.

The 2024 Friends of Business Summit: Cybertech Edition event aims to bring together the private and public sectors in the tech space from across the Commonwealth to explore the latest technological advances that can propel leaders in business, education and our central government into the digital age. This training opportunity and trade show event will be open to all current and future SBDC clients at no-cost; however, pre-registration will be required. Due to limited seating, clients who do not have a confirmed reservation will not be admitted.

Join us as we offer training opportunities where areas in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, smartphone usage, technological advancement in the workplace and education, and implementation of technological systems in governmental operations, including broadband policy, will be topics of discussion led by both local and national industry experts.

If You Go
Registration will close on Wednesday, March 27, 2024.

Key Highlights:

1. **Innovative Presentations**: Throughout the course of the day, industry experts and thought leaders will share insights into the latest technological trends and offer solutions on how businesses can leverage them for their growth and efficiency.

2. **Trade Show**: A vibrant trade show will be a central part of the summit, featuring tech businesses showcasing their cutting-edge products and services, providing a unique opportunity for the community to interact directly with tech innovators and explore firsthand, solutions that will be made available to them and how best they can be implemented to support business needs.

3. **Networking Opportunities**: The summit will foster networking opportunities, allowing attendees to connect with fellow professionals, government representatives, and tech industry leaders, building connections crucial for fostering collaboration and driving innovation.

"We are excited to bring the 2024 Friends of Business Summit: Cybertech Edition to the CNMI's business and education communities," said Nadine C. Deleon Guerrero, network director of the CNMI Small Business Development Center Network. "This event was designed to empower businesses with the market, knowledge and resources they need to thrive in the digital era. We are grateful for the collaboration with our industry experts and the NMC's Office of Information Technology. We look forward to a day of learning, networking, and exploring the exciting possibilities that technology offers as we move into the age of digital transformation."

Attendance to the 2024 Friends of Business Summit: Cybertech Edition comes at no cost, but registration is required. To register, call the CNMI SBDC Network Lead Center Office at (670) 237-6888 or email cnmisbdc@marianas.edu. To stay updated with your local SBDC, visit @cnmisbdc on Instagram or follow us on FaceBook: https://www.facebook.com/cnmisbdc.

Registration will close on Wednesday, March 27, 2024.

The CNMI SBDC Network promotes a business-friendly economic infrastructure in the community, builds entrepreneurial capacity and financial literacy within that community, and provides current and nascent small businesses with the technical assistance, counseling, training, and support they need to innovate, adapt, and grow.

The CNMI SBDC Network is composed of the CNMI SBDC lead center on Saipan, the Rota SBDC, and Tinian SBDC. CNMI SBDC Network is partially funded by a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration and NMC. ***(PR)***

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
CUC-RFP-24-011
DEBT COLLECTION LEGAL SERVICES

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed proposals from qualified and experienced entities for Debt Collection Legal Services.

The RFP Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one RFP package set. Perspective Entities must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies of your submission must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "**CUC-RFP-24-011, Debt Collection Legal Services**" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 A.M.(ChST) on March 15, 2024,** Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. All proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussion. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing proposers.

All Proposers are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Proposer due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract. The RFP does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the proposal under this request, or to procure or contract for services. The Proposers are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 23, 2024,** to Manny Sablan, CUC's Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Bettina G. Terlaje, CUC's Chief of Administration via email betty.terlaje@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, CUC's Senior Administrative Technician via email address marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

Main Office: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
P.O. BOX 501055 • SAIPAN • MP 96950-1055
Phone: (670) 237-6500 • Fax: (670) 234-5962
E-Mail Address: cpa.admin@pticom.com • Website: www.cnmiports.com

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT # 03-2024

Opening date: February 12, 2024 **Closing date: March 1, 2024**

Location: SAIPAN **SALARY**
Position(s): (1) Staff Attorney **UNGRADED**

Employment Application must be accompanied with a copy of all required diploma/certificates and/or official sealed transcripts, original copy of recent police record not more than six (6) months old, original copy of U.S. Department of Defense Form DD214 for retired members or veterans of our Armed Forces, and other documents as required for the position. Public Law 11-70 requires that all male applicants age 18 to 25 years old must submit documentation evidencing his registration with the Federal Selective Service System. All applications and required documents must be submitted to the ***CPA Administration Office, 2nd Floor Arrival Building, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport or CPA Administration Office, Tinian International Airport, or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport.*** Failure to provide any of the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. Certain vacancies may require written and/or physical test. Selected applicants will be subjected to pre-employment drug screening, 10-year Criminal History Record Check and 49 CFR Part 1542.209(d) Requirements. CPA reserves the right to waive or implement other qualifications to meet its needs. The deadline for submission of applications and required documents to the CPA Administration Office (Saipan) or at the Tinian International Airport or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport is no later than **5:00 P.M. on Friday, March 1, 2024.**

Detailed information on qualifications and position descriptions for the above positions may be picked up along with the application form from Monday-Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., except on holidays, at the CPA Administration Office (2nd Floor) of the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, Arrival Terminal or CPA Admin, Office at the Tinian International Airport or at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport. For additional information, please contact the CPA Human Resources Office by email at lorna.robert@cnmiports.com and hrspecialist@cnmiports.com or by phone at (670)237-6500.

CPA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and CPA hires those who are legally entitled to employment in the CNMI.

LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

Cope North 24 Goes to Tinian

LANCE CPL. DAVID GETZ

Royal Australian Air Force Leading Aircraftman Kurt Lewis, an imagery specialist with 464 squadron, watches as a U.S. Air Force C-130J Super Hercules aircraft with 403rd Wing taxis the flight line during Cope North 24 on Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands, Feb. 10, 2024.

LANCE CPL. DAVID GETZ

U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Dominick Harrell with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232, left, and Royal Australian Air Force Cpl. Morgan Hoellfritsch, a medical technician with No.2 Expeditionary Health Squadron, pose for a phoot during Cope North 24 on Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands, Feb. 10, 2024.

LANCE CPL. DAVID GETZ

Royal Australian Air Force Cpl. Morgan Hoellfritsch, right, a medical technician with No.2 Expeditionary Health Squadron, and U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Dominick Harrell with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232 examine each other's medical equipment during Cope North 24 on Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands, Feb. 10, 2024. Marines of Marine Aircraft Group 12 traveled from Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, and trained on Tinian during their participation in Cope North 24. Allies and partners train together during the multilateral exercise, Cope North 24, to improve shared tactics and multilateral defense capabilities.

LANCE CPL. DAVID GETZ

Royal Australian Air Force Cpl. Daniel Pinhorn, left, a senior imagery specialist, and Leading Aircraftman Kurt Lewis, an imagery specialist, both with 464 squadron, set up camera equipment during Cope North 24 on Tinian, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Feb. 10, 2024.

LANCE CPL. DAVID GETZ

U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Dominick Harrell with VMFA-232 and Royal Australian Air Force Cpl. Morgan Hoellfritsch, a medical technician with No.2 Expeditionary Health Squadron, examine each other's medical equipment during Cope North 24 on Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands, Feb. 10, 2024.

U.S. Marine Corps F/A-18 Hornet aircraft with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232 taxi the flight line during Cope North 24 on Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands, Feb. 10, 2024.

LANCE CPL. DAVID GETZ

LANCE CPL. DAVID GETZ

A U.S. Marine Corps F/A-18D Hornet aircraft with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232 taxis the flight line during Cope North 24 on Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands, Feb. 10, 2024.

LANCE CPL. DAVID GETZ

A U.S. Marine Corps F/A-18C Hornet aircraft with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232 takes off during Cope North 24 on Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands, Feb. 10, 2024.

LANCE CPL. DAVID GETZ

U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Dominick Harrell with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232 explains how to use a blast bandage during Cope North 24 on Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands, Feb. 10, 2024.

LANCE CPL. DAVID GETZ

U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Dominick Harrell with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232 explains how to use dermabond during Cope North 24 on Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands, Feb. 10, 2024.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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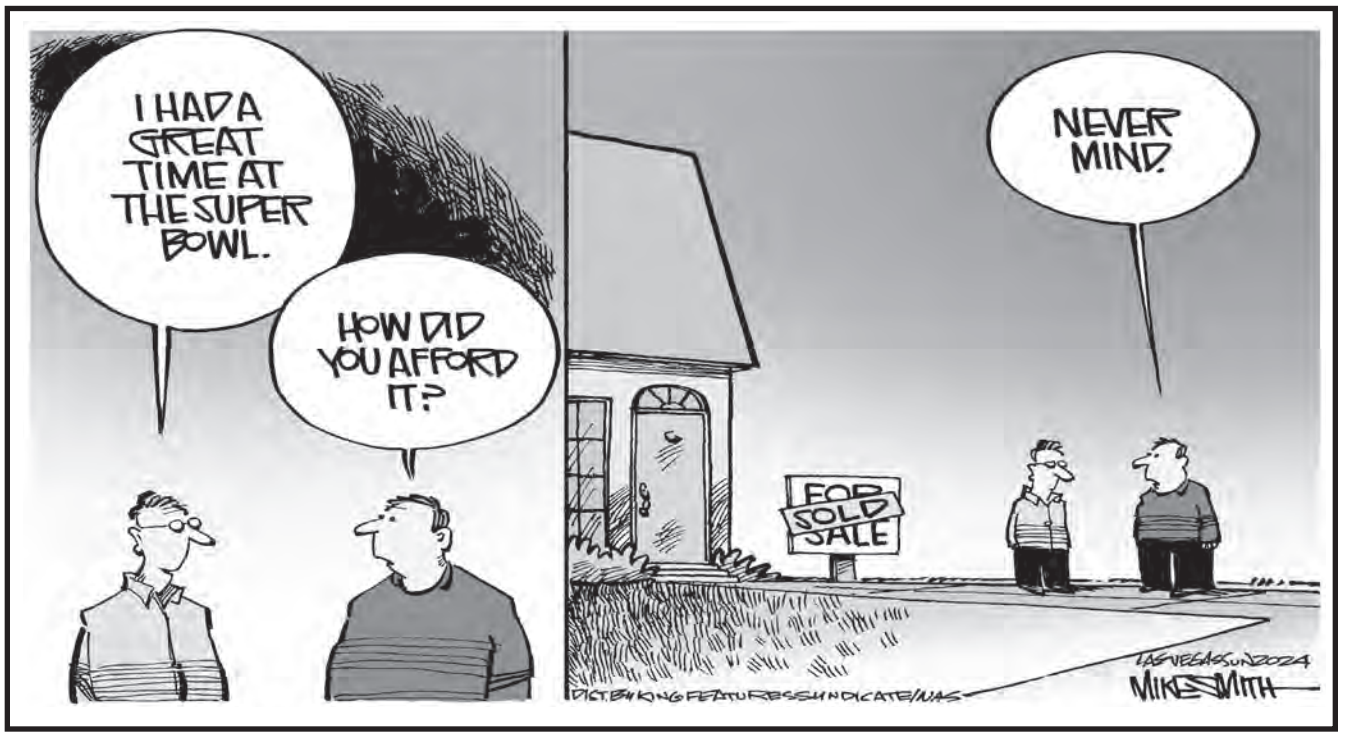
I HAD A GREAT TIME AT THE SUPER BOWL.
HOW DID YOU AFFORD IT?
NEVER MIND
FOR SOLD SALE
LAS VEGAS SUN 2024
MIKE SMITH
DIST. BY KING FEATURES SYNDICATE/NAS

EDITORIAL

Protect ACA as enrollment grows

The glitches accompanying the Affordable Care Act's rollout generated understandable criticism for years after its 2014 debut. But the landmark law's successes deserve the spotlight, too.

This year has brought a milestone worth noting: all-time high enrollment in health plans available through MNsure and other ACA insurance marketplaces nationwide, such as healthcare.gov. That achievement is important for voters to keep in mind as the 2024 election heats up, because consumer-friendly improvements to the ACA could hinge on the outcome. The law's very existence could be in question, too.

In January, Gov. Tim Walz announced that a record number of Minnesotans have signed up for a private health plan through MNsure. Contrary to the still-common misunderstanding that "Obamacare" is a one-size-fits-all government-run plan, MNsure sells policies from UCare, HealthPartners, Medica and other familiar companies. The ACA helps ensure that the plans purchased don't stick consumers with hidden costs. Even more important, the law makes financial assistance available to eligible consumers to instantly discount monthly costs.

Marketplaces like MNsure serve those who buy insurance on their own instead of getting it through an employer or Medicare, the federal program serving seniors. After open enrollment for 2024 coverage ended last month, Walz said that 146,445 Minnesotans had signed up for a private health plan through MNsure. That's a 13% increase from 2023.

National enrollment set a record as well. In late January, the Washington Post reported that over 21 million people had signed up for an ACA plan, an increase of 5 million year-over-year. This is the third straight year of record national enrollment, the story noted.

Numerous factors are driving this, but a key one is a recent change that the Star Tribune Editorial Board has long praised: expanded eligibility for ACA financial assistance. Congress temporarily removed the income cap for this aid during the pandemic and then extended this policy's sunset to Dec. 31, 2025. The change helped many people, such as farmers and entrepreneurs, who had incomes too high to qualify for ACA assistance previously but still struggled to buy a quality health plan.

Congress should keep this expanded eligibility in place after the 2025 sunset. Doing so will require leadership from Congress and the White House. That should help inform voters this fall. Former President Donald Trump unsuccessfully tried to repeal the ACA in 2017. He continues to target the law, announcing late last year on social media that "Obamacare sucks" and he wants to replace it. With what, he didn't say.

Smoothed-out glitches and better public understanding of the law has yielded popular support. Almost 60% of Americans approve of the law, according to 2023 KFF poll. This is the time to protect and strengthen the ACA so that more enrollment records are set and even more Americans can access coverage.

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Why is it OK for rich guys to steal my work?

By ANITA CHABRIA
Los Angeles Times

Every day, what's left of the once-mighty ranks of reporters across this country tap out stories meant to inform, entertain and expose.

Sometimes they are the work of minutes, the first bits of knowledge on breaking news such as fires, storms or even elections. Sometimes they are investigations that have taken years.

Inevitably, as soon as we publish, rich dudes with algorithms come in and sweep this work away for their own profit, like deodorant off a Target shelf. Every. Single. Story.

Retail theft is causing a civic meltdown and inspiring a ballot measure to incarcerate repeat toothpaste thieves.

But billionaire tech bros dismantling democracy for profit, stealing thousands of times a minute by selling advertising against something they don't own? That barely gets a shrug, even as more media professionals are laid off, more publications close, and reliable information becomes so scarce and hard to spot that truth itself has become political.

"It's sad on many levels," state Sen. Tom Umberg (D-Garden Grove) told me when I asked him what he thought of recent layoffs in media—including the loss of more than 100 of my colleagues at this paper, and cuts at other publications including the Wall Street Journal, Time, Condé Nast and the Messenger.

In all, nearly 600 news jobs were cut in January.

"It's also sad on a democracy level," Umberg said.

Umberg and state Assemblymember Buffy Wicks (D-Oakland) are attempting to do what other countries have already done—stop the steal—with a bill that has unsurprisingly sparked more than $1 million in lobbying by Big Tech to kill it. That spending was uncovered by Queenie Wong, a reporter at this paper who was sadly part of the layoffs, and it forced Wicks and Umberg to shelve the measure last year.

They are determined to revive it this year—but it will depend on how buy-able their colleagues are. Because, of course, there will be more money poured into killing it, and more pressure from Big Tech to keep the whole mess out of the public eye. That pressure will extend from the Assembly floor all the way to the governor's office.

If California does not pass Assembly Bill 886, though, it means that our elected leaders are cowards or craven money grabbers who are content to watch our democracy crumble in exchange for campaign contributions. Honestly, it is that simple—and that dire.

"To me, it's a basic fairness thing," Wicks told me of the notion of internet platforms paying part of their profits to news publishers. "I think it is going to be hard for them to say they can't do it here when they are doing it in other places."

She is referring to Australia and Canada, which have had enough of Big Tech simultaneously raking in advertising dollars off news content while claiming that only a few people are actually looking for news on their platforms.

Both countries have passed laws—albeit flawed ones heavily softened by lobbying—that require Google and Meta (the parent company of Facebook, Instagram and others) to negotiate payments with news publishers.

A bill for a similar law here in the U.S., the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act of 2022, is going nowhere in the Republican-dominated Congress, where a far-right contingent that rose to power on propaganda and lies has little interest in reining that in.

Which leaves California to lead the way—something the state is well positioned to do with its economic might, powerful enough to take on even the Musks and Zuckerbergs of the world.

"The lesson that you can take from the Canadian law is that [internet platforms] will pay," Haaris Mateen told me. "And so the people of California are perfectly entitled to ask for payments to be made to journalism companies."

Mateen is an assistant professor of finance at the University of Houston who has studied the issue. In November, he and his colleagues published a paper estimating that internet platforms would owe U.S. publishers between $11.9 billion and $13.9 billion a year if Congress passed the Journalism Preservation Act.

Using the same methodology, he estimates Google would owe California news publishers $1.4 billion annually, and Facebook would owe $265 million a year. In 2023, Facebook's revenue was $135 billion, and Alphabet, the parent company of Google, had $307 billion in revenue. So we are not talking about bankrupting these companies.

"I want Google to be economically successful. I want them to be one of the richest companies in the world," Wicks said. "I also want them to do the right thing."

Mateen and his colleagues also found that internet platforms and news publishers offer "complimentary services," meaning they help each other make more money together than each would make alone—if internet companies weren't just stealing their part of the equation.

Internet companies have long argued that news has little value to them, or their users, and therefore there's nothing to pay for. One former internet executive recently claimed it was a "silly complaint" to protest the use of news without compensation because posting stories brings traffic to news sites and "Everybody wants traffic!"

Traffic is great. But traffic without revenue is worthless. And the idea that people aren't looking for news online seems highly suspect (but the data is proprietary to the internet companies).

Those Google searches for "Ukraine?" Are they really people looking for red borscht recipes, not updates on the war?

Searches for "L.A. storm?" Are users really not looking for information on current weather dangers, all from news outlets such as NBC, the Associated Press, and yes, the Los Angeles Times?

"Can you imagine a version of Google with no news in it?" Mateen wonders. "It would look like Amazon."

But that is the main threat internet platforms are using to stop U.S. or California legislation—that if those laws are passed they will drop news from their sites. News publishers do fear this, because even the paltry amount they currently make from being searchable is crucial to spiraling bottom lines.

In protest of the Canadian law, Meta this summer blocked access to news on its sites for Canadians.

Pascale St-Onge, minister of Canadian heritage and a member

See WHY on Page 9

A DECADE OF LOVE

Marriage journey through growth, understanding, and healing

By ROSEMARIE D. EMBILE
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Rosemarie Embile is a teacher at the Northern Marianas International School.

As Heart Month unfolds, I am reminded of our decade-long marriage and how love is a journey beyond mere happiness. True contentment is found in sharing growth experiences, empathy, and healing.

Our journey began as a long-distance relationship, filled with excitement and anticipation of building a life together. But as we transitioned to married life and decided to live abroad, we faced unique challenges living in another country. The experience of living in a foreign land was both exhilarating and daunting at the same time. We had to learn new customs and adapt to a completely different way of life. We encountered obstacles but also cherished the new experiences and the journey we were on together. However, amidst the unfamiliarity and uncertainty, we discovered the true strength of our relationship.

Through moments of miscommunication and doubt, we learned the importance of relying on each other, communicating openly, and confronting our fears head-on. Our connection grew stronger as we weathered these storms, finding comfort in each other's presence.

Living abroad also taught us the significance of mutual growth. We realized that our dreams and fears evolved with our shared experiences. Instead of expecting each other to fulfill every need, we embraced the journey of growth together, supporting each other's aspirations and celebrating achievements, no matter how small.

Despite the difficulties that we have faced, our journey has been marked by some moments of deep understanding and acceptance. We have learned to accept each other's flaws and vulnerabilities, which has helped us create a safe space where authenticity is highly valued. This environment of trust and acceptance has allowed us to develop an unbreakable bond based on mutual respect and admiration.

Throughout our journey, we have undergone a transformative process of healing that has helped us grow and become better individuals. Together, we have faced our past traumas and insecurities, acknowledging and accepting their potential impact on our present and future. We have learned to identify our vulnerabilities and work toward overcoming them.

Our journey has centered on spirituality, and we have drawn strength from our shared beliefs and faith. We have learned to embrace self-awareness, patience, forgiveness, and unconditional love. These qualities are vital in our quest for inner peace and happiness.

As we celebrate another milestone in our journey, I am thankful for the lessons learned and the love we continue to share. While the road ahead may be uncertain, our bond will only strengthen as long as we continue to love, heal, and grow. For that, I am eternally grateful.

A SONNET BOUQUET FOR VALENTINE'S DAY

Love Found in Many Directions, Inflections, Variable Complexions, and Natural Selections

LITERARY NOOK
By JOEY CONNOLLY
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Joey aka Pepe Batbon Connolly is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is a sonnet practitioner who enjoys stargazing.

"Why should I grieve that she disdains my love,
Or seek for love, since love's a grief ? "
—Excerpt from a 16th century madrigal by Francis Pilkington (ca.1570-1638)

My sonnet below was in the Saipan Tribune on Feb. 14, 2023.

Why Should I Grieve

Why should I grieve and sing sad song blues
If love brings grief regardless of who I choose
In all compass directions wherever wind blows
We had hot torrid summers and then she froze
He snatched her right up underneath my nose
Took my beauty and left me without relief
Love's thorn pricks, blood flows from its rose
Must my love simply acquiesce to that thief
Lover come back to me, I will not fret or frown
About past events or any and all of our mistakes
Your touch, your kiss stops me from feeling down
With love from heaven above we shall partake
So why should I grieve and always seem to lose
My new love perspective stands inside your shoes.

Tracers of Love View From Above

I imagine if someplace like heaven does exist
as inhabitants up there look down from above
they find mirth and joviality in our attempts at love
and notice only foolish folks seriously resist
when viewed from a distance way far out in space
how petty our romantic emotions may seem
we wander about in a fool's paradise and dream
and don't even wake up when we fall flat on our face
thousands of love songs and poems have been written
books , musicals, plays, recordings overflow libraries
about those who lose and find love, the dreamer tarries
when young lovers, new lovers, old lovers get smitten
fools on a hill, high in mountains, down in the valleys
lovers rally, rotate, chance romance, dance, and dally.

Quantum Love Quantified (Feb. 10, 2017)

How much love is enough, can we ever get enough
measuring the amount of love is difficult to do
lifelong need mixed with other emotional stuff
disappointment depression and just feeling blue

Love parceled out to and from a giver and receiver
is like making limitations to friendship and kindness
it prevents those involved from being a true believer
while love itself is often simply blessed with blindness

Often more and more sometimes less love is more
love finds its way around us and through us all
life changes to family and friends love will explore
sensible and nonsensical love will rise and fall

It won't fall out of fashion or any part of our lives
love from our innermost being grows and thrives.

Love Quid Pro Quo: Shrimp for Giant Prawn

(Let us not be selfish and give some love to shellfish)

The shrimps donation got appreciation
frustration was found in its equation
liquid litigation for a saline situation
brought considerable complication
annunciation from a pink crustacean
whose aspiration was magnification
but lacking justification and qualification
thus some nullification of the operation
still a temptation for prawn fornication
genus exploration and gender glorification
provided plenty patient process purification
followed by acrobatic aqueous pacification
thus starting with sublimation on its vacation
the cool crustacean began real relaxation.

This is my latest Senescent Sonnet written on Jan. 17, 2024. It's narrative time ranges from my childhood in upstate New York in 1956 to stargazing and love today in the CNMI.

"Up above my head I hear music in the air"
—Sister Rosetta Tharpe (1915 - 1973)

Love Below and Above

Above the basement creaky plywood floors
brothers bounding down our wooden stairs
slamming of bathroom and bedroom doors
mice scurry around above in the attic in pairs
looking up at big huge pine cones in a tree
trails disappear around curves up the mountain
seafoam is floating down from a typhoon sea
getting all wet from a Rota waterfall fountain
looking up from the desert, island, my backyard
laying out in fields watching meteor showers
the constellation Orion is a seven of clubs card
observing moonrise and it passing over for hours
you coming down on top of me from above
enveloping me in ecstasy and all your love.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Statement on settlement

The CNMI Judiciary got a great deal in the settlement of the *Mang v. Superior Court* case. Under the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, compensatory damages could have been $10,000, but punitive damages could make that $110,000. It is always a little hard to predict punitive damages and I could have gotten none. There were other causes of action, too.

I am frustrated by the slow pace at which we moved, which helped the settlement. It has been 14 months and we have had one hearing with no rulings. This case could literally drag on forever with no resolution. The Judiciary needs funding to hire a judge rather than burden Guam when all judges recuse.

My inability to find an attorney was also a big factor in settling. I talked to seven CNMI attorneys but no one wanted to sue the court. That left me overmatched against the Office of the Attorney General.

Robert Mang
via e-mail

WHY

From page 8

of Parliament, warned at the time that "Facebook is trying to send a message, not only to Canada, but to other countries like New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States."

But Mateen said that Canada is a much smaller market than the U.S. or even California, and it would be difficult for the internet giants to pull off that kind of ban here.

"The California government has much more bargaining power in this," he said.

Mateen also warns that the window for fixing the problem is closing.

The urgency of acting now "is huge" because the coming age of AI is about to make the situation worse and more complicated, he warns.

Already, we are seeing experiments with companies using artificial intelligence to write news articles. The results have been less than impressive, but more is coming.

Mateen said that once the technology improves, which it will do quickly, platforms will sweep up articles and feed them into AI applications that mash them up like potatoes and spit out something it will dub original content.

These stolen-bits stories will be changed and entwined enough with multiple sources that it will be impossible to trace anything back to a single original article.

No accountability, no trust—and no one to pay.

Creating a precedent now that news has a real value is imperative, so that when AI sucks it all in it is reasonable for news companies to demand that their content be licensed or otherwise compensated before its ground up and made untrackable.

Media can't stop Big Tech themselves. It has tried, with subscriptions, one-off deals such as the agreement between Google and the New York Times and other desperate but futile attempts at finding "new models" that somehow fill the revenue gap without stopping the internet platforms from doing as they please with no consequence.

There is more than one problem plaguing the news industry, of course. But like retail theft, the news media need a systemic solution—government intervention because the thieves are too powerful, too organized and too brazen.

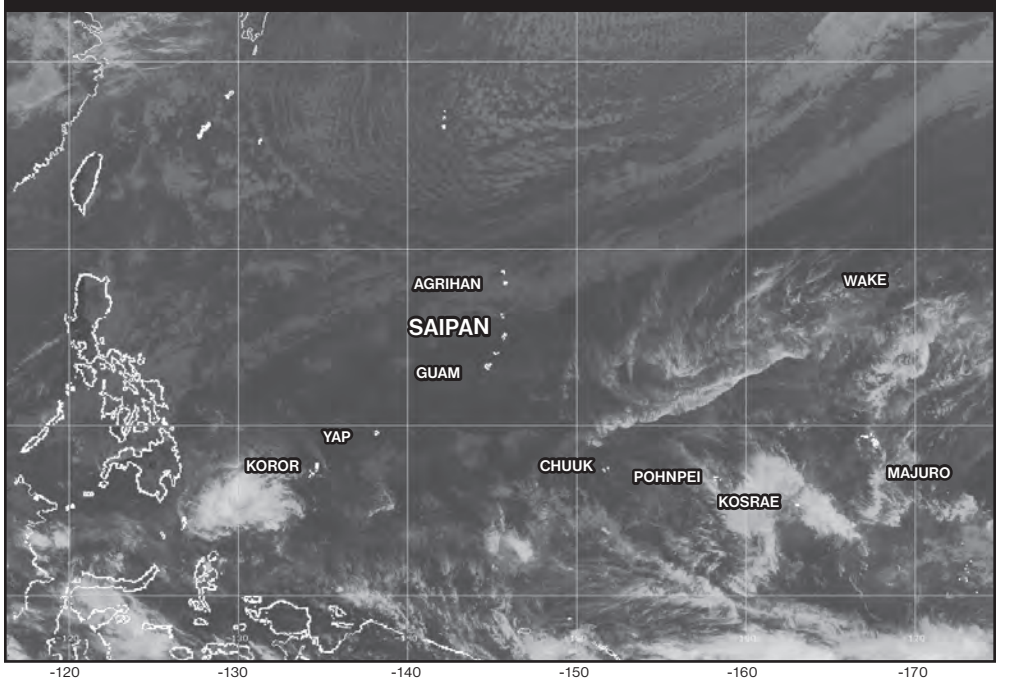
Whether that happens or not is going to come down to what the public demands—if we care as much about the theft of news as we do about deodorant.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Breezy. Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 20 to 25 mph.	Breezy. Partly sunny with scattered showers. Northeast winds 20 to 25 mph.	Mostly cloudy. A 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy. A 10 percent chance of showers.
83 / 76°	83 / 76°	83 / 76°	85 / 76°	85 / 76°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:23 AM TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows partly cloudy skies and isolated showers moving through the Marianas Waters this morning. The Tanapag buoy reveals combined seas of 4 to 6 feet, composed mainly of a north long period swell, a northeast shorter period, and northeast wind waves.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	84° / 76°
Palau	Sunny	85° / 79°
Yap	Sunny	84° / 79°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	87° / 81°
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:42 AM	6:20 PM
Thursday	6:41 AM	6:20 PM
Friday	6:41 AM	6:20 PM
Saturday	6:41 AM	6:21 PM
Sunday	6:40 AM	6:21 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	9:51 AM	10:38 PM	-
Thursday	10:33 AM	11:35 PM	-
Friday	11:18 AM	-	-
Saturday	-	12:34 AM	12:05 PM
Sunday	-	1:33 AM	12:56 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Fair	76° / 59°
Beijing	Fair	53° / 26°
Hong Kong	Fair	68° / 60°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	76° / 67°
London	Cloudy	55° / 50°
Los Angeles	Showers	64° / 53°
Manila	Mostly Sunny	90° / 73°
Melbourne	Windy	93° / 57°
Miami	Cloudy	77° / 68°
New York	Rain Shower	45° / 37°
Osaka	Sunny	59° / 37°
Paris	Cloudy	54° / 46°
Busan	Mostly Cloudy	58° / 37°
Rome	Mostly Sunny	59° / 43°
Salem	Showers	75° / 57°
San Francisco	Sunny	54° / 34°
Seoul	Mostly Cloudy	56° / 31°
Tokyo	Sunny	61° / 37°
Washington, DC	Fair	50° / 37°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
4:46 AM	Low Tide	0.13
10:57 AM	High Tide	1.88
5:38 PM	Low Tide	0.26
11:27 PM	High Tide	1.55

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3461	2:40PM	6:45PM	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3462	11:15PM	1:30PM+1	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3462	08:00AM	1:30PM	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Docomo Pacific unveils new fiber internet services in Guam

TAMUNING, Guam—Docomo Pacific, the regional leader in innovation, telecommunications, and entertainment, announced yesterday the upcoming launch of its new fiber internet services in Guam.

Today, we celebrate a milestone marked by dedication, innovation, and reliability. Docomo Pacific has navigated the ever-evolving telecommunications landscape using our existing fiber backbone infrastructure, that has enabled streaming entertainment, immersive gaming experiences, enhanced learning opportunities, and seamless connections. We have overcome many challenges, and we thank all our customers in Guam and the CNMI for their loyalty and support.

Looking to tomorrow, Docomo Pacific is committed to enhancing our fiber technology. We are proud to announce that we are bringing a true-fiber connection directly into your home and to additional businesses. We are also committed to expanding our services underground. This move emphasizes our dedication to bringing our customers advanced technology and ensures reliability in Guam's weather conditions.

"As we anticipate launching our fiber internet services directly into homes and additional businesses, Docomo Pacific is not just introducing innovative technology; we are embracing a future where connectivity is limitless," said Roderick Boss, chief executive officer of Docomo Pacific. "We are building on our many past achievements and embracing the future. We are on an exciting mission to provide fiber for everyone!"

Excitement is building as we prepare to bring this cutting-edge technology to Guam. Businesses and residents can look forward to a new era of connectivity, entertainment, and productivity. Stay tuned for more details as we prepare to launch Docomo Pacific's new fiber internet services.

For businesses who want to be the first to know, visit https://www.linkedin.com/in/docomopacific/ and subscribe to our newsletter at www.business.docomopacific.com.

Docomo Pacific is a wholly owned subsidiary of NTT Docomo, Japan's leading mobile operator. Headquartered in Tamuning, Guam, Docomo Pacific is the largest provider of personal, residential, enterprise connectivity and entertainment services in Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. More information at www.docomopacific.com. ***(PR)***

Fewer choices for consumers as brands prune offerings to focus on best sellers

NEW YORK (AP)—How much choice is too much?

Apparently for Coca-Cola, it's about 400 different types of drinks.

That's why the beverage company recently decided to discontinue half of them, shedding brands like Tab, Zico coconut water, Diet Coke Feisty Cherry and Odwalla juices but still leaving about 200 others to choose from.

It's a move that other businesses are making as well, reducing the variety of offerings from mayonnaise to cereals to cars and instead focusing on what they think will sell best.

Stew Leonard's, a supermarket chain that operates stores in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey, now has 24 cereal flavors or types, down from 49 in 2019. Edgewell Personal Care Co., the maker of Schick razors and Banana Boat suntan lotion, has trimmed certain varieties of its anti-bacteria wipes Wet Ones, among others. And Dollar General, based in Goodlettsville, Tennessee, used to stock six different kinds of mayonnaise on its shelves and is now looking to drop a couple of them.

"The consumer is not going to know the difference," Todd J. Vasos, CEO of Dollar General, told analysts in December. "Actually, it's going to make her life a little simpler when she goes to the shelf."

Just a year ago, Kohl's store in Clifton, New Jersey had tables stacked high with sweaters and shirts in a rainbow of colors as well as dress racks crammed with a wide assortment of styles. Now, it boasts a more edited approach—tables have slim piles of knit shirts that focus on fewer colors, and many dress racks have been reduced to just three or four styles.

Under its new CEO Tom Kingsbury, Kohl's has been cutting back on the colors and variations of sweaters, jeans and other items, while sending their buyers into the New York market more frequently to bring in fresh trendy merchandise.

"We would go out, and we would buy a lot of goods and it would come in 12, 14 months later, and it didn't perform very well," Kingsbury told analysts in a call in November. "We're going to be using the marketplace, so that we can react to the business quickly, getting into trends."

Some customers like the changes so far.

"It's pretty organized," said Kimberly Ribeiro, 30, who was at the Kohl's store on a recent Friday. "If it's not so cluttered, then you don't get overwhelmed."

Even in the auto world, shoppers are finding fewer choices. Both General Motors and Ford have been touting how they are limiting the number of option combinations customers can get on their vehicles to reduce manufacturing and purchasing complexity.

That's a reversal from a few years ago when there was an explosion of choices, encouraged in part by online shopping that paid no mind to space constraints. But that didn't always lead to sales so companies started pruning selections a year or two before the pandemic.

During the pandemic, the pruning only accelerated, with companies focusing on necessities as they wrestled with supply chain clogs. But even after the pandemic, when goods began moving freely again, many businesses decided less was better and justified the limited selection by asserting shoppers don't want so much choice. It's also more profitable for companies because they're not carrying over as many leftovers that need to be discounted.

Overall, new items accounted for about 2% of products in stores in 2023 across categories such as beauty, footwear, technology and toys, down from 5% of items in 2019, says market-research firm Circana.

Eric O'Toole, president of Edgewell's North America division, noted the pandemic presented "a really valuable stimulus" for reassessing assortment.

"We avoid jumping on fads, as the supply chain and retailer costs required to support getting to shelf typically don't generate a return in the end," O'Toole said. "A tighter, more curated portfolio supports healthy profit management. "

Many think they're also doing shoppers a favor, with studies showing that fewer choices, not lots of variety, actually encourage shoppers to buy more.

In 2000, psychologists Sheena Lyengar and Mark Lepper published a study that showed limited selection is better for the shopper. In their experiment, Lyengar and Lepper found consumers were 10 times more likely to purchase jam on display when the number of jams available was cut down from 24 to 6 even though they were more likely to stop at the display offering more selection. Subsequent studies have confirmed this phenomenon.

"Retailers are recognizing that they have to be respectful of shoppers' time," said Paco Underhill whose company, Envirosell, studies consumer behavior.

Still, retailers can't just slash products willy-nilly, said David Berliner, who leads the business restructuring and turnaround practice at BDO.

Inflation might have dropped below 3% last month for 1st time in 3 years

AP

A customer buys a cup of coffee at the Blind Tiger Cafe on Jan. 10, 2024, in Tampa, Fla.

WASHINGTON (AP)—Inflation may have fallen below a 3% annual rate last month, which would be the lowest level in nearly three years and a potentially significant milestone as the Biden administration seeks to bolster Americans' views of the economy before the November elections.

Economists have estimated that when the government issues the latest consumer price index Tuesday, it will show that prices rose just 0.2% from December to January for a third month in a row, according to forecasts compiled by data provider FactSet. Falling gas prices are expected to have slowed overall inflation.

And compared with a year earlier, inflation is thought to have cooled to 2.9%, down sharply from 3.4% in December. That would be the lowest year-over-year inflation figure since March 2021, when prices began spiking as a result of pandemic-related supply disruptions and higher consumer spending fueled by stimulus checks.

A decline in inflation below 3% would provide President Joe Biden with an opportunity to claim that price increases are steadily cooling even as the economy continues to grow and unemployment remains near a half-century low. Still, many Americans remain frustrated that the pandemic-related inflation surge—the worst in 40 years—has left average prices about 19% higher than they were when Biden took office.

Tuesday's data, if it proves to be as mild as expected, may also contribute to the "greater confidence" that Federal Reserve officials have said they need to conclude that inflation is sustainably declining to their 2% target level, allowing them to start cutting interest rates from their current high levels.

Still, not all the inflation measures that will be reported Tuesday are expected to be so favorable. Excluding volatile food and energy costs, so-called "core" inflation could look stickier. Core inflation is watched closely because it typically provides a better read of where inflation is likely headed.

Core prices are forecast to have risen 0.3% in January for a third straight month. Though that figure would reduce annual core inflation from 3.9% to 3.7%, it would still be well above the level the Fed would like to see.

One factor that probably kept core prices up last month is that January is when many businesses impose price increases. While the government seeks to adjust its inflation data for such seasonal factors, it doesn't always do so perfectly.

Economists at Goldman Sachs have forecast that such adjustments will raise prices, in particular, for car insurance, prescription drugs and health care services. Other analysts have projected that the costs of hotel stays and airline fares jumped from December to January.

Because such figures will likely show that inflation remains elevated, most economists think the Fed will want to wait until May or June to begin cutting its benchmark rate from its 22-year-high of roughly 5.4%. The Fed raised its key rate 11 times, from March 2022 to July of last year, in a concerted drive to defeat high inflation. The result has been much higher borrowing rates for businesses and consumers, including for mortgages and auto loans.

Tuesday's data will also shed light on a concern of the Fed, which Chair Jerome Powell highlighted during a recent news conference: Most of the decline in inflation so far has stemmed from falling prices for goods, including used cars, furniture and appliances, which have dropped in six of the past seven months.

The costs, though, of services—auto repairs, health care, hotel rooms, concerts and other entertainment—are still rising at a brisk pace. Core services prices, which exclude energy, jumped 5.3% last year. By contrast, goods excluding food and energy rose just 0.2%. The Fed will want to see some cooling in services prices to become more assured that inflation is declining.

A rate cut by the central bank typically lowers the costs of mortgages, auto loans, credit cards and other consumer and business borrowing, and could bolster the economy. But a stronger economy could also pose a challenge for the Fed because faster growth can accelerate wages and consumer spending. If businesses aren't able to keep up with greater customer demand, they can respond by raising prices, which would worsen inflation.

In the final three months of last year, the economy grew at an unexpectedly rapid 3.3% annual rate. There are signs that growth remains healthy so far in 2024. Businesses engaged in a burst of hiring last month. Surveys of manufacturing companies found that new orders rose in January. And services companies reported an uptick in sales.

Nation

AS SENATORS GRIND TOWARD FINAL VOTE

House speaker casts doubts on Ukraine and Israel aid package

WASHINGTON (AP)—House Speaker Mike Johnson late Monday sharply criticized a $95.3 billion aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other countries, casting serious doubts about the future of the package just as Senate leaders were slowly muscling it toward a final vote.

Senate leaders, trying to send a message that the U.S. remains committed to its allies, were looking to overcome marathon speeches from a determined group of Republican senators and hold a vote to pass the bill in the early morning hours Tuesday.

But Johnson, a Louisiana Republican, said in a statement the package lacked border security provisions, calling it "silent on the most pressing issue facing our country." It was the latest—and potentially most consequential—sign of opposition to the Ukraine aid from conservatives who have for months demanded that border security policy be included in the package, only to last week reject a bipartisan proposal intended to curb the number of illegal crossings at the U.S.-Mexico border

AP

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., right, arrives as the Senate moves closer to a final vote on an emergency spending package that would provide military aid to Ukraine and Israel, replenish U.S. weapons systems and provide food, water and other humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza, at the Capitol in Washington, Monday, Feb. 12, 2024.

"Now, in the absence of having received any single border policy change from the Senate, the House will have to continue to work its own will on these important matters," Johnson said. "America deserves better than the Senate's status quo."

The mounting opposition was just the latest example of how the Republican Party's stance on foreign affairs is being transformed under the influence of Donald Trump, the likely Republican presidential nominee.

Even if the package passes the Senate, as is expected, it faces an uncertain future in the House, where Republicans are more firmly aligned with Trump and deeply skeptical of continuing to aid Ukraine in its war against Russia.

As Republican Leader Mitch McConnell and 17 other GOP senators have provided the votes to ensure the foreign aid package stays on track to clearing the Senate, Johnson has shown no sign he will put the package up for a vote.

Support for sending military aid to Ukraine has waned among Republicans, but lawmakers have cast the aid as a direct investment in American interests to ensure global stability. The package would allot roughly $60 billion to Ukraine, and about a third of that would be spent replenishing the U.S. military with the weapons and equipment that are sent to Kyiv.

"These are the enormously high stakes of the supplemental package: our security, our values, our democracy," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer as he opened the chamber. "It is a down payment for the survival of Western democracy and the survival of American values."

Schumer worked closely with McConnell for months searching for a way to win favor in the House for tens of billions of dollars in aid for Ukraine. But after the carefully negotiated Senate compromise that included border policy collapsed last week, Republicans have been deeply divided on the legislation.

Sen. J.D. Vance, an Ohio Republican, argued that the U.S. should step back from the conflict and help broker an end to the conflict with Russian President Vladimir Putin. He questioned the wisdom of continuing to fuel Ukraine's defense when Putin appears committed to continuing the conflict for years.

"I think it deals with the reality that we're living in, which is they're a more powerful country, and it's their region of the world," he said.

Vance, along with Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul and other opponents, spent several hours on the floor railing against the aid and complaining about Senate process. They dug in to delay a final vote.

"Wish us stamina. We fight for you. We stand with America," Paul posted on social media as he and other senators prepared to occupy the floor as long as they could.

Paul defended his delays, saying "the American people need to know there was opposition to this."

But bowing to Russia is a prospect some Republicans warned would be a dangerous move that puts Americans at risk. In an unusually raw back-and-forth, GOP senators who support the aid challenged some of the opponents directly on the floor.

Shooter entered Texas megachurch with young son, used AR-style rifle in the attack, police say

HOUSTON (AP)—The shooter at a Texas megachurch on Sunday had a history of mental illness and brought their young son to the attack that was carried out using an AR-style rifle and ended in an exchange of gunfire with two off-duty officers, authorities said Monday.

Houston police identified the shooter as Genesse Ivonne Moreno, 36, who they say wore a trenchcoat and carried a backpack upon entering Lakewood Church, which is led by the pastor Joel Osteen. Moreno used both male and female aliases, but investigators who looked at past police reports found that Moreno identified as female, Houston Police Commander Chris Hassig said.

The attack happened in between services at the Houston megachurch—located in a former NBA arena—and sent worshippers scrambling for safety.

During the shooting, Moreno's 7-year-old son was shot in the head and remained in critical condition Monday, authorities said. Moreno, who was killed by the officers, was not a known member of Osteen's congregation, said church spokesman Don Iloff.

Police and FBI investigators said they have not established a motive for the shooting but were looking into a dispute involving Moreno and the family of Moreno's ex-husband. Hassig and others said Moreno had a history of mental illness, including being placed under emergency detention in 2016, but provided no additional details.

Investigators found antisemitic writings by the shooter, Hassig said, noting Moreno's former in-laws are Jewish. The rifle also had a "Palestine" sticker on the buttstock. Hassig described Moreno as a "lone wolf" who acted alone.

Police searched Moreno's residence in Conroe, a city more than 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of the church. Court records show that Moreno had prior arrests and was involved in a divorce and child custody battle in 2022, in which Moreno's ex-mother-in-law indicated she had sought advice from pastoral staff at Lakewood.

The court documents do not indicate which staff the woman contacted. Iloff said he had not found anyone familiar with the contact described in the legal filings.

Moreno appeared to have legally purchased the rifle used in the attack in December, and investigators were looking into how Moreno obtained it, officials said. Moreno also carried a .22 caliber rifle into the church, police said.

House GOP will try again to impeach Mayorkas after failing once. But outcome is still uncertain

WASHINGTON (AP)—Having failed to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas the first time, House Republicans are determined to try again Tuesday, but it's not at all certain the do-over vote will produce a better tally after last week's politically embarrassing setback.

The evening vote is expected to be tight with Speaker Mike Johnson's threadbare GOP majority unable to handle many defectors or absences in the face of staunch Democratic opposition to impeaching Mayorkas, the first Cabinet secretary facing charges in nearly 150 years.

Despite the expected arrival of Majority Leader Steve Scalise, who will bolster the GOP numbers after being away from Washington for cancer care, even one other missing or weather-delayed lawmaker could imperil the Mayorkas impeachment. If the vote pushes later into the week, the outcome of Tuesday's special election in New York to replace ousted Rep. George Santos could tip the balance further.

Johnson posted a fists-clenched photo with Scalise, announcing his remission from cancer, saying, "looking forward to having him back in the trenches this week!"

The GOP effort to impeach Mayorkas over border security has taken on an air of political desperation as Republicans try to make good on their priorities after last week's mishap and after Republicans rejected a bipartisan Senate border security package.

Border security has shot to the top of campaign issues, with Donald Trump, the Republican front-runner for the presidential nomination, insisting he will launch "the largest domestic deportation operation in American history" on day one if he retakes the White House.

In stark language over the weekend, Trump debased immigrant arrivals. even going so far as to suggest without evidence they bring disease into the U.S. Trump reiterated his plans of a second-term roundup to remove potentially millions of newcomers from the U.S., a spectacle practically unseen in modern times.

"We have no choice," Trump said at a rally in South Carolina.

The House, which launched an impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden over his son's business dealings, has instead turned its attention to Mayorkas after Trump ally Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia pushed the debate forward.

If the House succeeds in impeaching Mayorkas, the charges against him would go to the Senate for a trial, but neither Democratic nor Republican senators have shown interest in the matter and it may be indefinitely shelved to a committee.

After a months-long investigation, the House Homeland Security Committee filed two articles of impeachment against Mayorkas—arguing that he "willfully and systematically" refused to enforce existing immigration laws and that he breached the public trust by lying to Congress and saying the border was secure.

Never before has a sitting Cabinet secretary been impeached, and it was nearly 150 years ago that the House voted to impeach President Ulysses S. Grant's secretary of war, William Belknap, over a kickback scheme in government contracts. He resigned moments before the vote.

World

Yemen's Houthi rebels fire missiles at ship bound for Iran, their main supporter

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)—Yemen's Houthi rebels fired two missiles at a ship carrying corn bound for a port in Iran on Monday, causing minor damage but no injuries to its crew, authorities said.

The attack on the Marshall Islands-flagged, Greek-operated bulk carrier Star Iris shows just how widely the Houthis now target ships traveling through the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait connecting the two waterways.

The Star Iris had been heading from Brazil to Bandar Khomeini in Iran, the main backer and armer of the Houthis in Yemen's yearslong war.

"The group owner and operator regularly trade bulk cargo with Iran, so this was assessed to be the likely destination," said Ambrey, a private security firm. Ambrey added that the Star Iris sustained damage to its starboard side in the attack.

The Houthis sought to describe the Star Iris as an "American" vessel, and said they targeted the ship with multiple missiles. The Star Iris' ultimate owner, Star Bulk Carriers Corp. of Athens, Greece, is traded on the Nasdaq Stock Market in New York. It did not respond to a request for comment.

Days earlier, another ship owned by Star Bulk, the Star Nasia, came under attack from the Houthis.

WORLD BRIEFS

Russia and West clash over Ukraine at Security Council meeting ahead of war anniversary

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—Russia accused the West on Monday of sabotaging agreements that would have prevented the war in Ukraine —but the U.S. and its allies put the blame squarely on Moscow, saying there is no escaping that President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of its smaller neighbor. Days before the second anniversary of Russia's invasion on Feb. 24, 2022, Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia again put the cause of the war down to the failure to implement the 2015 Minsk agreements, which he blamed on "Kyiv's sabotage" supported by the West. The agreements aimed to resolve the conflict between Ukraine and Russia-backed separatists that flared in April 2014 after Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support for the separatists in the mostly Russian-speaking industrial east called Donbas. At Monday's Security Council meeting that Russia called on the seventh anniversary of the signing of the Minsk peace plan brokered by France and Germany, Nebenzia called claims by Ukraine and Western nations that Russia refused to implement the agreements "absolutely baseless."

Mexican police arrest members of drug gang behind the alleged killing of 8 people in Cancun

MEXICO CITY (AP)— Prosecutors said Monday they have arrested six members of a drug gang in the Mexican resort of Cancun that allegedly killed and hacked up five people with a machete, and dumped three other victims in a shallow grave. The gang, which prosecutors say also engaged in extortion, was protected by a network of motorcycle taxis and minors who acted as lookouts. Authorities also announced the arrest of 23 people on charges they operated a fake tour agency that served as a cover for drug sales in Cancun. The suspects operated a call center in which they offered sports equipment and tour packages to tourists, but then failed to deliver them. On the second floor they had a complex operation in which drug deals were allegedly made over the phone and delivered by motorcycle.

Former Puerto Rico mayor caught on film in bribery case faces 5 years in prison

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)—A former Puerto Rico mayor who was caught on film in a high-profile bribery case was sentenced Monday to more than five years in prison as part of an ongoing federal crackdown on government corruption in the U.S. territory. Ángel Pérez Otero, a former lawmaker who also was president of the island's Federation of Mayors and served as mayor of Guaynabo from 2017 to 2021, had been found guilty of conspiracy, bribery and extortion in March. He had been accused of awarding contracts and expediting invoice payments in exchange for thousands of dollars in cash as part of a scheme that federal authorities said ran from late 2019 through May 2021. Attorneys for Pérez said they plan to appeal.

Mexico says it seized over 40 tons of meth from a drug lab in Sonora state

MEXICO CITY (AP)— Mexican law enforcement agencies said Monday they seized over 40 tons of methamphetamine at the biggest drug lab found during the current administration.

The Mexican navy said Monday that the lab was located in Quiriego, a township in a remote part of the northern border state of Sonora. It said the 91,000 pounds (41,310 kilograms) of meth found there was equivalent to about half of the 162,000 pounds of the drug Mexico has seized all year so far. Another 28,000 pounds (12,705 kilograms) of meth chemicals were found, the navy said. Photos distributed by the navy showed a series of large metal boilers and chemical reactors arranged in a line amid the brush and low trees of the site, which was visible from the air. Over 200 centrifuges, boilers and condensing chambers were discovered, according to the navy.

Canadian man facing 5 murder charges in the deaths of his wife, children and teen relative

CARMAN, Manitoba (AP)—A Canadian man has been charged with five counts of first-degree murder in the deaths of his wife, three young children and a 17-year-old female relative, authorities said Monday. Royal Canadian Mounted Police Insp. Tim Arseneault said Ryan Howard Manoakeesick, 29, has been charged and said the dead are the suspect's 30-year-old wife, the couple's 6-year-old daughter, 4-year-old son and 2-month-old daughter, as well as the wife's 17-year-old niece. The five died Sunday at multiple crime scenes in and around the town of Carman, 85 kilometers (53 miles) southwest of Winnipeg. Police responded to a hit-and-run and found the woman lying dead in a ditch on Sunday morning.

Poland, France, and Germany vow to make Europe stronger

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Russian forces launched 45 drones over Ukraine in a five-and-a-half-hour barrage Sunday, officials said, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy continued the reshuffle of his war cabinet as the war enters its third year.

In a statement, the Ukrainian air force said it had shot down 40 of the Iranian-made Shahed drones over nine different regions, including on the outskirts of the country's capital, Kyiv.

The attack targeted agricultural facilities and coastal infrastructure, officials for Ukraine's southern defense forces wrote on Telegram. They said that a strike in the Mykolaiv region had injured one person, sparking a fire and damaging residential buildings.

Another person was injured in Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region when a blaze broke out due to falling debris from a destroyed drone, said the head of the region's military administration, Serhiy Lysak.

Border police in Moldova also said Sunday that fragments of a "Shahed-type drone" were found near the southern town of Etulia close to the border with Ukraine, but that the debris posed no danger to communities nearby.

"There is a suspicion that the detected drone debris is one of the drones shot down by the Ukrainian anti-aircraft system," the border police said in a statement, referencing overnight attacks launched on Friday by Russian forces on Ukraine's Izmail region.

The distance between Etulia and Izmail is about 40 kilometers (25 miles) as the crow flies. Authorities said access to the impact site has been restricted.

Moldovan President Maia Sandu posted on the social media platform X, that "Russia's war on Ukraine hits close to home in Moldova—again."

"The discovery of Shahed drone debris in southern Moldova today serves as another stark reminder of the grim reality we face," she said. "Russia's aggression endangers the entire continent. Support for Ukraine must continue."

The strikes come as Zelenskyy continues his shakeup of military commanders in a bid to maintain momentum against attacking Russian forces.

Kyiv announced Sunday that former deputy defense minister Lt. Gen. Alexander Pavlyuk would become the new commander of Ukraine's ground forces. The post was previously held by Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, who was named Thursday as the replacement for Ukraine's outgoing military chief, Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi.

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Good Housekeeping

HANDOUT

Items such as spa like elements can help to add fragrance to a bathroom.

HANDOUT

Greenery can serve to add an eco-friendly touch to a bathroom space.

Eco-friendly tips

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service

Fresh, clean, and eco-friendly. There are numerous ways to create an environment that is chemical free while also providing cleanliness and freshness.

Eco-friendly ways to infuse scents in your space.

Consider herbs. From sage to lavender, these herbs can provide a fragrant and appealing scent.

Incorporate oils. Pure essential oils are the most powerful.

Add greenery. Plants and trees are not only attractive but can also help to improve the air quality and oxygen in a home.

Purchase a diffuser. These popular items for the home can help to spread fragrance throughout your home for an extended period of time.

Burn a soy candle. Candles that are natural help to provide a scent in a nontoxic way.

Eco-friendly cleaning tips

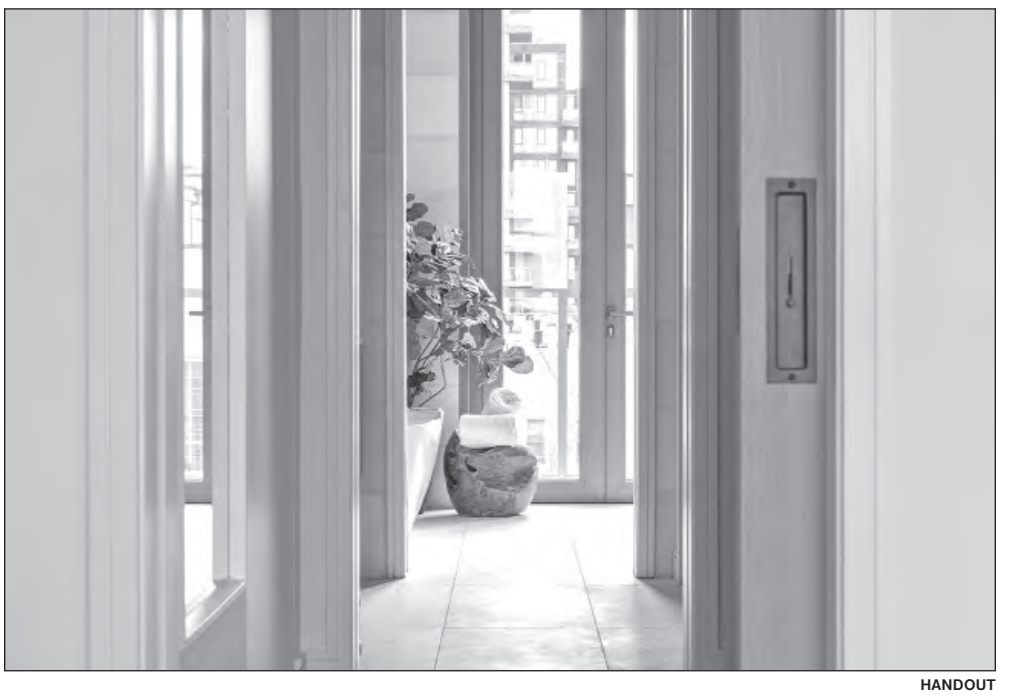
Make your own cleanser. Create a natural cleaning solution such as one made from baking soda, lemon juice and borax.

Clean windows and surfaces with lemon juice, vinegar and water.

Use reusable or washable rags for cleaning as opposed to disposable paper towels.

HANDOUT

A teak bath tray displays a mix of eco friendly elements such as organic and soy candles and soaps.



HANDOUT

A wood stool adds an organic element to this bathroom.

How should I plan my remodel?

By PAUL F. P. POGUE
Ask Angi

Remodeling can help you fall in love with your home all over again. But a significant home remodel may be one of the biggest investments you ever make, so planning carefully for success is a good idea. Working with a designer before you start the contracting process can help clarify your vision and improve your odds of getting a great job.

Winter is a great time to start planning a remodel. Designers and builders will be less busy so that you can get on their schedule more quickly. Outlining plans as early as possible helps you prepare wisely and budget accordingly.

All renovation jobs have both a design and build phase, but often, the design is handled on the spot by the pro. However, you'll have separate design and build processes once you get into bigger jobs, such as a complete kitchen remodel or a new home addition. Sometimes, design and build come from the same company. Other times, two separate pros will work together. If you have your heart set on a particular designer or contractor, ask them what pros they often work with on projects like yours.

Hiring and cost

Design costs can be determined in many ways. Some designers charge a flat fee, others an hourly rate. The design cost is often a percentage of the final job itself. You can hire either an architect or a specialized home designer. (In some cases, your state or local regulators may require an architect or structural engineer, especially if the work involves load-bearing walls.) Architects have more education and licensing requirements, so you'll pay more for an architect. However, that comes with more resources to help you if things go wrong, such as insurance, licensing boards, and experience. A home designer will cost less; in some cases, they'll have specific expertise for your job, such as kitchen or bathroom renovations.

Quite often, the cost is determined by how involved they will be in the entire project. If a designer supervises construction, for example, expect to pay somewhat more. On average, you'll pay 7% to 10% of the build's cost for an architect and 3% to 5% for a home designer.

When hiring an architect or designer, find out early on what kind of communication style they have. It's critically important that you communicate smoothly to get the job done. Your job is to let them know what you want. Their job is to visualize a way to make it real. Ask what contractors they work with and what involvement they'll have once the job is underway.

Since most home designers aren't licensed by state or local authorities, one of the best methods to determine their experience is to ask if they hold accreditation or membership in respected trade organizations. For instance, the National Kitchen and Bath Association certifies designers who have completed a certain amount of education.

Tweet your home care questions with #AskingAngi and we'll try to answer them in a future column.

Life & Style

Carnival season marks Fat Tuesday with celebrities, pretend monarchs

NEW ORLEAN (AP)—New Orleans' Carnival season is nearing its "Fat Tuesday" climax, with the last lavish Mardi Gras parades set to roll through historic neighborhoods while narrow streets of the old French Quarter host a raucous, continuous street party of revelers overflowing its bars and restaurants.

Two of the city's favorite parades—the processions of Rex, King of Carnival and the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club—were set to roll Tuesday morning on major thoroughfares. Monday night featured the parade of the Krewe of Orpheus, co-founded by home-grown musician and actor Harry Connick Jr. In addition to elaborate floats and marching bands, scheduled participants included Connick himself, actor Neil Patrick Harris and Harris' husband, David Burtka.

AP

Orpheus Monarch Neil Patrick Harris reacts upon seeing the crowds lined up near the corner of St. Charles and Napoleon avenues during the Krewe of Orpheus parade in New Orleans for Lundi Gras, Monday, Feb. 12, 2024.

New Orleans has the nation's largest and best known Carnival celebration. It's replete with cherished traditions beloved by locals. But it's also a vital boost to the city's tourist-driven economy—always evident in the French Quarter.

"No strangers down here," visitor Renitta Haynes of Chattanooga, Tennessee, said as she watched costumed revelers on Bourbon Street over the weekend. "Everybody is very friendly and approachable. I love that."

She and her friend Tiffany Collins wore giant purple, green and gold bead necklaces as they sipped drinks.

The annual pre-Lenten festivities aren't limited to New Orleans. Similar celebrations are held in Louisiana and along the Gulf Coast. Mobile, Alabama, where six parades were scheduled Tuesday, lays claim to the nation's oldest Mardi Gras celebration. And other lavish Carnival celebrations in Brazil and Europe are world renowned.

Monday's activities in New Orleans also included an afternoon "Lundi Gras," or Fat Monday celebration on the Mississippi Riverfront, including live music. Part of the event was the annual ceremonial meeting of the man tapped to be this year's King of Carnival—chosen by the Rex Organization, a predominantly white group with roots in the 19th century—and the man elected king of the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, founded by Black laborers in the early 1900s. The meeting is a custom that began in 1999 in what was seen as a symbol of slowly eroding social and racial barriers.

Usher and longtime partner Jenn Goicoechea get married after the Super Bowl, records show

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Usher and longtime partner Jenn Goicoechea married in Las Vegas just hours after the R&B superstar's headline appearance at the Super Bowl halftime show, according to officials and documents. The officiant who wed the pair is known to dress as an Elvis Presley impersonator.

The couple married Sunday at Vegas Weddings, according to a marriage certificate made public Monday. The ceremony was officiated by the Rev. Ronald Joseph Polrywka, better known locally as Ron DeCar. Witnesses included Jonnetta Patton, Usher's mother.

"Congratulations to the Newlyweds!" chapel owner Melody Willis-Williams said in a statement. "We were beyond thrilled to host in this epic day for Usher and his new wife."

"As much as we love, love," the statement adds, "this is the couple's news to share any further details on. We'll always be fans of Usher! Yeah!"

Usher, 45, and Goicoechea, 40, have been together since 2019 and have two young daughters. A representative for Usher, Lydia Kanuga, did not immediately respond to questions from The Associated Press, including whether the service was conducted in the chapel, on a balcony or in the drive-thru lane.

DeCar did not respond to an email from The Associated Press seeking additional information. A publicist said DeCar declined to comment.

Clark County Clerk Lynn Marie Goya, the head of the county's marriage license bureau, confirmed that her office issued a license to Usher and Goicoechea last week.

"Naturally they got married in Las Vegas," Goya said. "What better place than the 'Wedding Capital of the World?'"

The document, issued Thursday, lists the couple's full names—Usher Raymond IV and Jennifer Jean Goicoechea—and shows they paid a $102 filing fee. It notes that Usher had been married before and Goicoechea had not. It also listed their business address at a commercial building in the Encino neighborhood of Los Angeles.

Usher divorced his first wife, Tameka Foster, in 2009 after two years together, and he won custody of their two sons. In December 2018, the singer filed for divorce after three years together with his second wife and former manager, Grace Miguel.

Super Bowl thriller was most-watched program ever, averaging 123.4M viewers

By JOE REEDY
AP SPORTS WRITER

The longest Super Bowl game will also go down as the most-watched program in television history.

According to Nielsen and Adobe Analytics, Kansas City's 25-22 overtime victory over San Francisco on Sunday night averaged 123.4 million viewers across television and streaming platforms. That shattered last year's mark of 115.1 million for Kansas City's last-play victory over Philadelphia and is a 7% increase.

The game was televised by CBS, Nickelodeon and Univision and streamed on Paramount+ as well as the NFL's digital platforms.

Nielsen also said a record 202.4 million watched at least part of the game across all networks, a 10% jump over last year's figure of 183.6 million.

The CBS broadcast averaged 120 million. The network's previous mark for its most-watched Super Bowl was 112.34 million for the 2016 game between the Denver Broncos and Carolina Panthers.

Some of the increase can be attributed to a change in the way viewers are counted. Nielsen began including out-of-home viewers in its ratings in 2020, but only from limited markets. That measurement expanded to all 50 states beginning this year.

Sunday's game was only the second of the 58 Super Bowls to go to overtime. The previous one was in 2017, when New England rallied from a 28-3 deficit and beat Atlanta 34-28.

Mother can't understand why son has walked away

DEAR ABBY: I've always been close to my children, but now that they are adults, it seems I'm losing my connection with one of them. He married a girl of a different race, and while that doesn't bother me, I have a strong hunch she's the reason he has distanced himself from not only me, but also the rest of the family.

When I recently shared with him that I felt his wife is a bit of a busybody and had overstepped some boundaries, he told me he no longer wants a relationship with me. I don't think I said anything so bad that he'd totally remove himself from my or our lives, but I'm no longer going to try to force him to be a part of this family.

After I blocked his wife from social media (because she doesn't interact, but stalks and then reports back to him), he has blocked me. I'm usually good at dealing with conflict, but he's steadily drawing further and further away. I love all my children, but he needs to realize it's not ALL about his wife—we're his family, too. I really need help with this one.

ADULTS' MOM

DEAR ADULTS' MOM: Leaving your daughter-in-law and her race out of this for a moment, the situation you have described is one that sometimes happens when a son gets married. When that happens, the young man's allegiance switches from mom and family to his wife.

Your daughter-in-law reviewing your posts and discussing them with your son isn't outrageous, particularly if he isn't viewing them himself. Were you posting something she found hurtful or offensive? If the answer is no, you may have to accept that, for whatever reason, your son has decided to move in a different direction. If the answer is yes, offer an apology and see if it's possible to bury the hatchet.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: My husband of 30 years and I are in-house separated. We sleep in separate bedrooms. I want a divorce, but he refuses to leave, even though he could afford another house. Our grown son came to visit recently and was staying in our camper in our backyard. The camper is next to our swimming pool.

Last Sunday, I looked out the kitchen window and saw my husband standing in the pool naked. Our son was in the camper at the time and came out to see his father standing there. When I asked my husband why he did this, my question was met with rage and yelling that he didn't want to get his bathing suit wet. Don't you think this is the behavior of a depraved person?

FINISHED IN FLORIDA

DEAR FINISHED: For your son to have seen his father naked in the swimming pool isn't what is cause for concern. More alarming is that a change in his usual behavior may indicate a mental or emotional problem and calls for a medical evaluation. (He might be more open to it if your SON suggests it.)

Please consult an attorney and ask what would be involved if you were to go through with that divorce. Get those answers now, before a crisis happens.

■■■

DEAR READERS: On this day that celebrates love, I want you to know how much I value the relationship I have with you. Wishing all of you a Happy Valentine's Day!

WITH LOVE, ABBY

■■■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

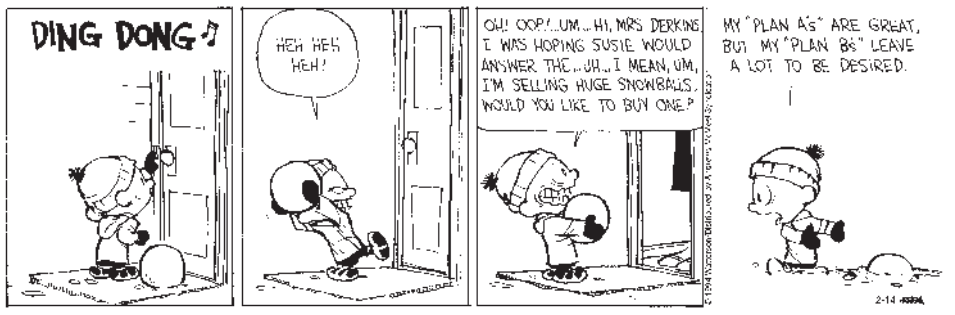
By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

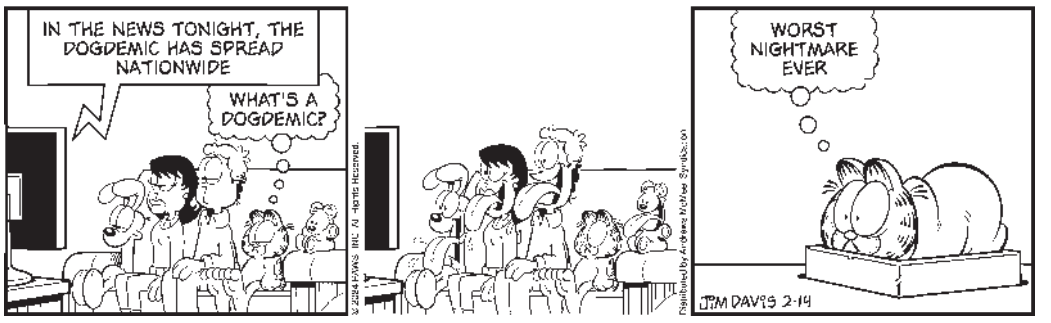
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


DING DONG!
HEH HEH HEH!
OH! OOP!...UM...HI, MRS. PERKINS. I WAS HOPING SUSIE WOULD ANSWER THE...UH...I MEAN, UM, I'M SELLING HUGE SNOWBALLS. WOULD YOU LIKE TO BUY ONE?
MY "PLAN A'S" ARE GREAT, BUT MY "PLAN B'S" LEAVE A LOT TO BE DESIRED.

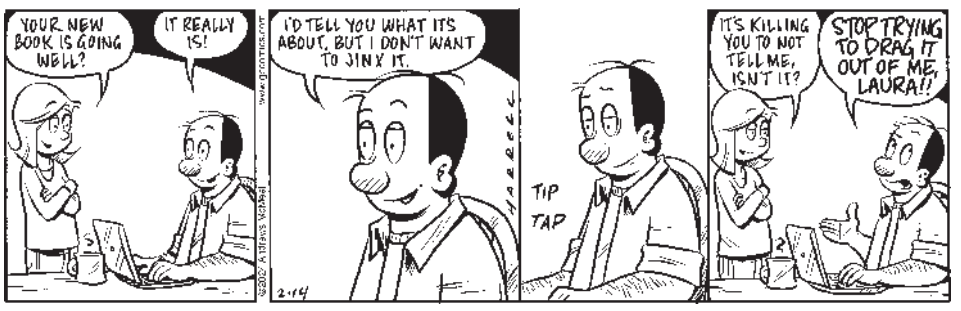
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@Home

By Bryan Basset


YOUR NEW BOOK IS GOING WELL?
IT REALLY IS!
I'D TELL YOU WHAT ITS ABOUT, BUT I DON'T WANT TO JINX IT.
TIP TAP
IT'S KILLING YOU TO NOT TELL ME, ISN'T IT?
STOP TRYING TO DRAG IT OUT OF ME, LAURA!!

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

WHAT ARE YOU WRITING?
IT'S PERSONAL. IT'S ABOUT THE PAIN I'VE FELT FROM THE REJECTION BY WOMEN WHO HAVE BROKEN MY HEART.
OH, I SEE. STUFF FOR YOUR JOURNAL. NOT THE KIND OF THING YOU'D WANT TO BLAB TO THE WORLD.
YEP. I'M HOPING TO MAKE IT INTO A SONG AND SELL A MILLION COPIES.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

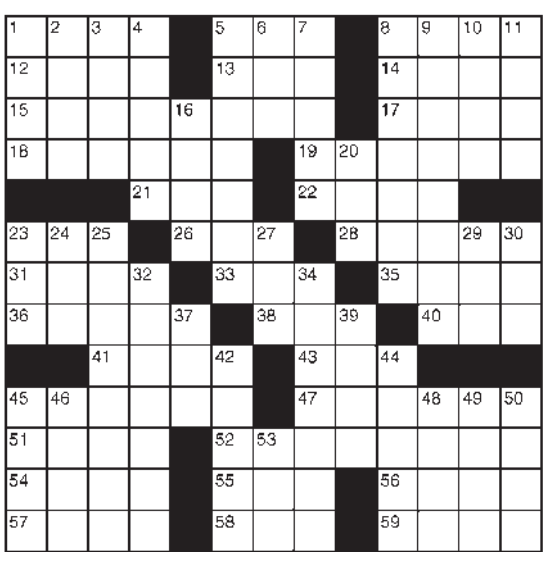
1 Slugger Aaron
5 LAPD alert
8 "Hey!"
12 Downwind
13 Born abroad?
14 Highly rated
15 Mathematician and computer pioneer Ada
17 Iranian money
18 Oolong brewer
19 Kind of benefit
21 — Paulo
22 Navy commando
23 Crunchy sandwich
26 2500, in Roman numerals
28 Snapshot
31 Actress Hatcher
33 "— outta here!"
35 "Frozen" reindeer
36 Place for sweaters?
38 "Whatever"
40 Rock's Brian
41 Salinger title girl
43 Young lion
45 Boston athlete
47 Nebraska tribe members
51 Slender woodwind
52 Old "romance at sea" TV show, with "the"
54 Volcanic flow
55 Broad st.
56 To be, in Toulon
57 Kept tabs on
58 Sailor
59 Leak out slowly

DOWN

1 Sentry's cry
2 Medicinal plant
3 Saint Petersburg's river
4 Stays fresh
5 Human body
6 Chest muscle
7 Complaints
8 Outcasts
9 Song from "Kiss Me Kate"
10 Hose woe
11 Far (Pref.)
16 Rich soil
20 Workout unit
23 "Dynamite" band
24 Meadow
25 Romeo, to Juliet
27 Rep.'s rival
29 Hamilton bill
30 Yoko of music
32 Rather
34 Salvage
37 Paris pal
39 Actor Cronyn
42 Brilliance
44 Innocents
45 Natalie or Nat
46 Online auction site
48 Table d'—
49 Bern's river
50 Dance move
53 Eggs

Solution time: 23 mins.

Yesterday's answer 2-14



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Danai Gurira, 46; Simon Pegg, 54; Meg Tilly, 64; Terry Gross, 73.

Happy Birthday: Assess your life and plan to incorporate more of what makes you happy and content while eliminating or restructuring what's standing in your way. Small but consequential moves will go under the radar, alleviating interference and giving you time to cement in place what you want before anyone's the wiser. Thinking ahead and remaining low-key will carry you to the finish line. Your numbers are 8, 13, 26, 29, 34, 41, 45.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Don't let what others do bother you. Gravitate toward those you have something in common with and let the magic happen. Participation will lead to new and exciting connections or bring you closer to someone who makes you feel good about yourself. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: Evaluate situations before revealing your true feelings. You may not like what you see or hear, but it will prevent you from making a grave mistake. Don't let disappointment discourage you from participating in an event. Love and happiness are within reach. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Share what's necessary. Offering too much information or time will wear you down and jeopardize what you want to achieve. Use intelligence and energy to mastermind your way to victory instead of helping someone outmaneuver you. Expect to be misled; don't believe everything you hear. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Revisit your dreams and be realistic, and you'll devise a plan and budget that works. Refuse to let anyone talk you into something you don't need or can't afford. Information and preparation are your tickets to success. Spend time with someone you love. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Take a moment to think matters through. If you take on too much or promise the impossible, you'll fall short and jeopardize your position, reputation or relationship. Maintain dignity, be a good listener and compromise, and in the end, the results will favor you. ✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Scope out the possibilities and costs involved and maximize what you have. Don't be afraid to show your feelings or to find out where you stand with someone you love. Take your time, refrain from overreacting and learn from the experience. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Discussions will be difficult, but you should resolve issues dragging you down. Say what's on your mind, and the response you get will be reasonable. Offer compromise. Personal criticism will lead to personal gain and self-improvement. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Think twice before you say or do something that will cause a stir. Concentrate on yourself and how you can improve physically, emotionally and financially instead of trying to change others. Expand your interests and friendships. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Affiliate with people who are experiencing similar situations and can share applicable information. Use your money wisely, as unnecessary purchases will lead to debt. A personal issue will escalate if not resolved quickly. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Focus on home and the changes that make life easier. Transparency will help you deal with complaints before they can dismantle your plans. Don't act out of spite or engage in emotional blackmail. If you want to get things done, negotiate. ✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: A reunion will lead to an open window of opportunity. Don't let emotions get in the way. Consider what's being offered or available to you and how it will affect your life, then proceed confidently. Take a dominant position, ask questions and act accordingly. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Update investments, documents and how you manage your money and personal affairs. Surround yourself with people who can tap into your ingenuity and bring out the best in you. Thinking ahead will pay off. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are generous, emotional and proactive. You are persuasive and secretive.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

2		6			9	3	4	
4		8		5			2	
1								
		9	7				6	
					5	2		7
	5			6				1
		3	5			8	9	
5		4			2		1	3

Difficulty: ★★★ 2/14

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

6	4	2	5	1	3	9	7	8
9	3	5	7	8	6	1	2	4
8	7	1	2	9	4	6	5	3
5	9	3	6	2	1	8	4	7
2	8	4	9	5	7	3	6	1
1	6	7	3	4	8	2	9	5
3	5	6	1	7	9	4	8	2
7	1	8	4	6	2	5	3	9
4	2	9	8	3	5	7	1	6

Difficulty: ★★ 2/13

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

LOVE IS IN THE AIR Solution: 9 letters

V	R	S	P	I	H	S	R	O	W	I	S	H	Y	D
S	A	E	S	A	A	D	E	T	H	G	I	L	E	D
E	P	L	S	E	S	H	A	R	E	S	O	T	A	E
P	T	A	E	P	N	S	T	N	D	N	O	T	R	T
O	U	F	R	N	E	R	I	N	G	V	Ⓗ	H	N	C
H	R	P	C	K	T	C	E	O	E	H	Ⓤ	R	I	A
Y	E	F	P	A	E	I	T	D	N	C	Ⓖ	I	N	R
P	N	E	G	Y	R	E	N	N	N	A	Ⓢ	L	G	T
N	G	C	N	F	L	E	S	E	E	E	T	L	C	T
O	A	H	I	G	T	O	N	A	S	T	T	E	T	A
T	G	A	K	T	N	T	V	A	E	D	N	D	L	I
I	E	R	I	G	I	I	F	E	S	L	A	O	G	Y
Z	D	M	L	C	N	E	V	A	E	H	P	Y	C	O
E	S	E	E	C	N	A	M	O	R	E	P	M	A	P
D	A	D	O	R	E	G	N	I	L	D	D	U	C	N

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Adore, Attracted, Care, Charmed, Content, Cuddling, Delighted, Devoted, Engaged, Enticed, Friends, Goals, Heaven, Hope, Hugs, Hypnotized, Liking, Long, Loving, Nice, Pamper, Passionately, Please, Puppy Love, Rapture, Respect, Romance, Safe, Scent, Share, Smitten, Song, Spark, Teach, Tenderness, Thrilled, Valentine's Day, Wish, Worship, Yearning

Yesterday's Answer: Potatoes

The NEW Wonderword Grand Millennium #1 in LARGE PRINT is now available at: www.WonderWordBooks.com or call 1-800-642-6480. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Wembanyama posts 1st triple-double as Spurs beat Raptors

TORONTO (AP)—Victor Wembanyama had 27 points, 14 rebounds and a career-high 10 blocks in his second triple-double, Devin Vassell added 25 points and the San Antonio Spurs snapped a seven-game losing streak by routing the Toronto Raptors 122-99 on Monday night.

Wembanyama made 10 of 14 attempts and had five assists and a pair of steals in 29 minutes as the Spurs won for the first time since Jan. 27 against Minnesota.

"I felt great today," Wembanyama said. "Great rhythm, started the game strong. I guess it's just the NBA, you know. We've got ups and downs in terms of shape, and today was an up day."

Wembanyama's previous career high for blocks was eight, set against Memphis on Nov. 18. He leads the NBA in that category.

"He did a little bit of everything," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said. "Obviously he's an all-around, talented player. He's got a great feel for the game and it shows in a variety of ways, whether it's passing or making decisions, blocking shots."

AP

San Antonio Spurs center Victor Wembanyama (1) drives toward the basket as Toronto Raptors' Jakob Poeltl, second from right, defends during first-half NBA basketball game action in Toronto, Monday Feb. 12, 2024.

It was the first triple-double with blocks since Clint Capela had 13 points, 19 rebounds and 10 blocks for Atlanta against Minnesota on Jan. 22, 2021. That had also been the last time anyone in the NBA blocked 10 shots in a game.

"I guess it's not on the scouting report that he can block a shot," Vassell said of Wembanyama. "I guess they'll learn one of these days."

Since 1973-74 when blocks were tracked, Wembanyama is just the fourth rookie and first since David Robinson in 1990 to record a triple-double with 10 blocks. He is the first player since Hakeem Olajuwon on April 13, 1996, to record at least 20 points, 10 rebounds, 10 blocks and five assists in a game.

Jeremy Sochan scored 16 points and Keldon Johnson added 12 as San Antonio led from wire-to-wire and snapped a four-game road losing streak.

Tre Jones had 10 assists for the Spurs. San Antonio finished with 37, one shy of matching a season high.

Gradey Dick scored 18 points, Kelly Olynyk had 17 and RJ Barrett 13 for the Raptors, who had won the past six meetings with San Antonio. Toronto has lost 14 of 18.

Raptors All-Star Scottie Barnes, who registered his third triple-double of the season in Saturday's home loss to Cleveland, had nine rebounds and nine assists against the Spurs but shot 3 for 15 and scored seven points.

"That was not the standard that we expect," Toronto coach Darko Rajakovic said.

Barnes also drew his coach's ire by leaving the bench in the final seconds of the fourth quarter.

"This is not the competitive spirit we want," Rajakovic said.

Wembanyama blocked Toronto's opening shot of the game, followed up with a 3-pointer, then added an alley-oop dunk as the Spurs started with a 10-0 run and led 34-28 after one quarter. The rookie had nine points, four rebounds and three blocks in the first.

"I thought we fed off of Vic in the beginning.," Vassell said. "He was really carrying us through that first quarter."

Vassell scored 13 points in the second and Wembanyama had 10 as San Antonio stretched its lead to 67-50 at the half.

Wembanyama shot 7 for 8 in the first half. He made both of his 3-point attempts as San Antonio was 7 of 13 from distance in the first two quarters.

Wembanyama blocked six shots in the third as the Spurs outscored Toronto 36-25 to take a 103-75 lead to the fourth.

TIMBERWOLVES 121, CLIPPERS 100

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Karl-Anthony Towns scored 24 points, Anthony Edwards added 23 and Minnesota pulled away in the second half and beat Los Angeles in a matchup of two of the top teams in the Western Conference.

Rudy Gobert had a double-double with 17 points and 10 rebounds as the Timberwolves (37-16) remained atop the Western Conference with their third win in the last four games.

Paul George and Kawhi Leonard led the Clippers (35-17) with 18 points apiece and James Harden added 17. George became the Clippers' career 3-point leader with 7:23 remaining in the third quarter, hitting his 739th to surpass Eric Piatkowski.

76ERS 123, CAVALIERS 121

CLEVELAND (AP)—Buddy Hield scored 24 points in his third game with Philadelphia, Kelly Oubre Jr. also had 24 and the 76ers ended Cleveland's nine-game winning streak.

The Cavs nearly rallied from a 10-point deficit in the final 1:25. They had a chance to win at the buzzer, but Darius Garland missed a 3-pointer from the right corner.

All-Star Tyrese Maxey added 22 points for the Sixers. Maxey split a pair of free throws with 6.9 seconds left, giving Cleveland a last possession to extend its longest winning streak since it had LeBron James in 2018.

Donovan Mitchell led the Cavs with 36 points.

BUCKS 112, NUGGETS 95

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo had 36 points, 18 rebounds and five assists as Milwaukee showcased its improved defense in beating Denver.

After losing five of their first six games under new coach Doc Rivers, the Bucks have won two straight by a combined margin of 53 points and allowed fewer than 100 points in back-to-back games for the first time this season.

Nikola Jokic had 29 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists for the Nuggets. Aaron Gordon scored 14 and Michael Porter Jr. had 11. Denver's Jamal Murray sat out the second half due to shin splints, and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope left with tightness in his right hamstring.

Damian Lillard scored 18 points for the Bucks, and Bobby Portis added 13 points before getting ejected with 4:54 remaining.

Warriors assistant coach Milojevic buried in Serbia after heart attack in US

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP)—Golden State assistant coach Dejan Milojevic was buried Monday in his native Serbia, with many members of the Warriors' staff among the hundreds of mourners present for the funeral on a rainy day at a Belgrade cemetery.

Among the Warriors coaches and staff who made the trip: head coach Steve Kerr, assistant coaches Chris DeMarco and Ron Adams, general manager Mike Dunleavy, team basketball and business liaison Zaza Pachulia, and team vice president for player health and performance Rick Celebrini.

Kerr and those staffers who attended the funeral missed Monday night's rescheduled game at Utah. The Warriors were in Salt Lake City when the 46-year-old Milojevic had a heart attack at a team dinner on Jan. 16. He died the next day, and that night's Jazz-Warriors game was postponed.

Assistant coach Kenny Atkinson was serving as head coach for Monday's rescheduled game.

"It's not, obviously, the ideal situation in a lot of senses," Atkinson said before the game. "And then from a personal standpoint, adding on that we're here in Utah, where Deki had the incident ... it's tough. But this is what we do in our jobs as professionals. We've got to move forward, but also remembering."

Milojevic—whose flower-draped casket was carried Monday by his former Serbian teammates—was a mentor to two-time NBA MVP Nikola Jokic of the Denver Nuggets, among many other players. Milojevic was part of the staff that helped the Warriors win the 2022 NBA championship.

The Warriors have honored his memory by putting his initials on their jerseys and on the apron of their home floor. Atkinson spoke with Kerr on Monday, about both the funeral and the game.

Milojevic's death triggered a massive outpouring of sympathy from the basketball community and fans in his homeland, where he was a star player with Partizan Belgrade and other clubs in Serbia, Montenegro, Turkey and Spain before turning to coaching.

Predrag Danilovic, president of the Serbian Basketball Federation, said there was no person who did not respect and love Milojevic.

"A great basketball player, great coach left us, and above all a great man, a man without a single stain. I had that honor and pleasure to be friends with him even though we did not play together," Danilovic said at a formal commemoration for Milojevic on Saturday.

Marko Keselj of Serbia's Ministry of Sports and a former basketball player said the sport was Milojevic's life.

AP

Golden State Warriors head coach Steve Kerr, left, attends the funeral of late Golden State Warriors assistant coach Dejan Milojevic in Belgrade, Serbia, Monday, Feb. 12, 2024. Milojevic, 46, died on Jan. 17, in Salt Lake City after heart attack.

"With his positive energy he brought out the best in us," Keselj said. "He motivated us to be better in every way, as people and as players. Deki was a friend, mentor, he was a leader."

Milojevic was in his third season with the Warriors. He previously coached in Serbia—where he once worked with a young Jokic before the current Denver star came to the United States—along with Montenegro, plus had been an assistant coach for the Serbian national team alongside current Atlanta assistant Igor Koskoskov.

Milojevic worked closely with Jokic, Los Angeles Clippers center Ivica Zubac, Orlando center Goga Bitadze and Houston center Boban Marjanovic, among others, during his time as a coach in Europe.

Milojevic won three consecutive MVP awards in the Adriatic League, which comprises teams from former Yugoslavia, taking those trophies in 2004, 2005 and 2006 when the 6-foot-7, 240-pound power forward was at the peak of his playing career. Jokic was MVP of that league in 2015.

Before joining the Warriors, Milojevic had NBA experience through Summer League assistant coach stints with Atlanta, San Antonio and Houston.

Milojevic is survived by his wife, Natasa, and their children, Nikola and Masa.

Chiefs achieve dynasty status with 3rd Super Bowl title in 5 years

LAS VEGAS (AP)—This was supposed to be the year when the Kansas City Chiefs were vulnerable. Their wide receivers were dropping passes, their offense was committing penalties, Travis Kelce was supposedly getting old and there was no way that Andy Reid and Patrick Mahomes could possibly overcome all of that.

Yet they did, and wiped away any doubt that the Chiefs are the new NFL dynasty.

With their come-from-behind overtime win over the San Francisco 49ers in the Super Bowl on Sunday night, the Chiefs raised their third Lombardi Trophy in four trips over a five-year span. And they became the first team since the New England Patriots with Tom Brady two decades ago—the last great football dynasty—to successfully defend their title.

Even Mahomes, when asked whether the Chiefs had become a dynasty, replied: "It's the start of one."

"It's a little bit surreal," Reid said. "I don't know what a dynasty is. You guys have the thesaurus, so you can figure it out. It's a great win because I know how hard it is to do and how hard the season was, the ups and downs of the season, and how proud I am of the guys for just hanging with each other and staying positive with each other."

AP

Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes (15) lifts the Vince Lombardi Trophy after the team's victory over the San Francisco 49ers in the NFL Super Bowl 58 football game Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024, in Las Vegas.

Never before has an underdog in back-to-back Super Bowls won both, and that may best illustrate two important facts: The Chiefs were eminently beatable this season, and nobody was able to beat them when it mattered.

Start with the roster, which had to be creatively put together by general manager Brett Veach around $37 million in salary cap space taken up by Mahomes, the biggest cap hit in the NFL this season. Yet the architect of each of their last three title runs was able to find bargains such as Jerick McKinnon and Drue Tranquill who contributed far beyond their monetary value.

Look at their wide receivers, youngsters and journeymen who dropped more passes than any team in the league this season. Yet they galvanized around a quiet rookie, Rashee Rice, who not only became their No. 1 option but a bona fide star.

It goes beyond personnel, though. Consider the road Kansas City had to navigate this season.

At one point, the Chiefs played six consecutive games in which the other team had extra days of rest, the only time that has happened in NFL history. They had to play in Germany, beating the Dolphins in Frankfurt in a preview of a future wild-card game, and at one point lost five of eight midway through the season to drop to the No. 3 seed for the playoffs.

After beating the Dolphins in the fourth-coldest game in NFL history, the Chiefs hit the road in the postseason for the first time in six years with Mahomes as the starter. But as underdogs in Buffalo and Baltimore, the Chiefs embraced their newfound status as hunters rather than the hunted, and they responded by playing their best football of the season.

In terms of strength of opposition, the Chiefs successfully navigated the toughest path to the Super Bowl in history.

Then came a fitting finale in Las Vegas.

How Chiefs shape roster will be top story to follow in offseason

LAS VEGAS (AP)—The Kansas City Chiefs are a dynasty and already are looking to become the first team to three-peat in the Super Bowl era.

They're underdogs to do it.

Getting to New Orleans to play for the Vince Lombardi Trophy next February will be difficult for Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs. There's no guarantee Travis Kelce isn't retiring, Chris Jones is set to become a free agent and even coach Andy Reid could ride off into the sunset.

Perhaps that's why the Chiefs are not the betting favorite to win the Super Bowl next year. The San Francisco 49ers are plus-450 to win it all, according to FanDuel Sportsbook. The Chiefs have the second-best odds at plus-750, followed by Baltimore (plus-900). Detroit and Buffalo are tied at plus-1,200 to close out the top five.

The NFL wrapped up its 2023 season when Kansas City overcame another 10-point deficit in a Super Bowl and rallied to beat the 49ers 25-22 in overtime on Sunday to become the first repeat champions since the New England Patriots 19 years ago.

Now, it's onto 2024 with the first Super Bowl in Las Vegas in the books.

One of the biggest offseason storylines will be how the Chiefs shape their roster. Kelce didn't commit to returning, though he is excited about going for three in a row. There's no word how his relationship with pop star Taylor Swift will affect his decision.

AP

Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes (15) and tight end Travis Kelce (87) celebrate their win against the San Francisco 49ers in overtime during the NFL Super Bowl 58 football game Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024, in Las Vegas. The Chiefs won 25-22.

The league is certainly pulling for Kelce to stick around so Swift can keep showing up to Kansas City's games.

"We'll go ahead and enjoy this and everything that just happened," Kelce said. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I've been able to go through three times now, man, and so it gets sweeter every time."

Jones, the All-Pro defensive tackle, is due for a new contract, and it's unlikely the Chiefs will use the franchise tag on him, so they have to make a tough decision.

The 49ers had their best shot at a record-tying sixth Super Bowl but beat themselves. Still, oddsmakers favor them to finish the job next season. At least they won't have a question mark at quarterback like they did last offseason when Brock Purdy was returning from major elbow surgery.

"If I'm going to lose with a group of guys, I'd do it with those guys any time, and we'll get over this and come back next year ready to go," Niners coach Kyle Shanahan said.

There's no time off in the NFL, so vacations will be short.

The league's annual scouting combine is only two weeks away and free agency follows on March 13. Jones, Vikings quarterback Kirk Cousins, Jaguars edge rusher Josh Allen and Bengals receiver Tee Higgins headline the list of players who could be available.

The draft goes to Detroit on April 25 for three days, and there could be new rules in place by the time rookies show up for training camp.

The NFL plans to address the hip-drop tackle, but the players' union adamantly opposes banning it.

"Hip-drop tackles cause injuries at 25 times the rate of any other tackle," NFL executive Jeff Miller told The Associated Press. "There are major time loss injuries. We're talking about high-ankle sprains. We're talking about knee injuries. We're talking about broken bones, so we know it's a risk to the game. And we know that players are missing time as a result. And when you identify something like that, in the past we've gotten rid of blindside blocks because we saw it as unnecessarily risky behavior that we wanted to get rid of. That led to fewer injuries when we took that play out. Similarly with hip drop, this is something that we've identified as an issue."

49ers head for an offseason wondering 'What if?'

AP

San Francisco 49ers fullback Kyle Juszczyk walks off the field after the NFL Super Bowl 58 football game against the Kansas City Chiefs, Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024, in Las Vegas. The Chiefs won 25-22 against the 49ers.

LAS VEGAS (AP)—For the San Francisco 49ers, another season came a frustrating finish with an inevitable question: What if?

What if the Niners hadn't botched a punt return to set up a touchdown for Kansas City? What if San Francisco could have converted a third down and run down the clock for a game-winning field goal at the end of regulation? What if the 49ers scored a touchdown on the opening drive of overtime?

And perhaps most importantly, what if the Niners didn't have to run into Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs in the Super Bowl again?

"I was speechless," defensive end Nick Bosa said about his mindset following a 25-22 overtime loss to Kansas City in the Super Bowl on Sunday.

"There's not really much to say at this point. It's going to hurt. It's going to hit in waves. But that's life."

It's becoming an all-too-familiar feeling for the 49ers. They blew a 10-point lead in the fourth quarter of the Super Bowl for the 2019 season and lost to Mahomes and the Chiefs when one key stop or big completion could have changed that outcome.

They then squandered another 10-point lead in the fourth quarter of the 2021 season's NFC title game against the Rams when a dropped potential interception by Jaquiski Tartt proved costly.

Then an elbow injury to Brock Purdy on the opening drive of the NFC championship game last season in Philadelphia ended that season.

Now a team with 62 wins in past five regular seasons and playoffs has no title to show for it.

3 sponsor Wacky Awards at Saipan Marathon

Not that fast, but super weird? You still have a chance to win sporting goods gift certificates in the Saipan Marathon 2024 Wacky Awards on March 9, 2024, in the Marianas. The Wacky Awards are sponsored by The Athlete's Foot, Boarderline, and All-Star Sporting Goods.

Saipan Marathon—a certified measured course by World Athletics, in cooperation with the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races—is offering up awards for Best Costume, Best Body Paint, Shortest Shorts, Most Awesome Shoes, Ugliest Shoes, and Craziest Hair.

"Our Wacky Awards are all in the spirit of fun, which is always a big part of marathons around the world," said Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Christopher A. Concepcion. "Judges will be standing by at the 5K turnaround, so participants, bring your creativity and your crazy!"

MVA

A participant in Saipan Marathon gets festive with a wacky costume. Saipan Marathon 2024 will include Wacky Awards on March 9 in the Marianas, awarding cash prizes for Best Costume, Best Body Paint, Shortest Shorts, Most Awesome Shoes, Ugliest Shoes, and Craziest Hair.

Saipan Marathon is organized by the MVA and Northern Marianas Athletics and is sanctioned under the Northern Marianas Athletics rules and regulations.

Skechers is the Exclusive Title Sponsor of the race. Other marathon sponsors are Gold Sponsors Bridge Capital, IT&E, and Triple J Saipan; Silver Sponsors United Airlines, Matson, The Athlete's Foot, Boarderline and All-Star Sporting Goods; Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands; Northern Marianas Athletics; and Bike Pro.

Over 350 runners have registered for either the full marathon, half-marathon, 10K or 5K, which will all begin and end at American Memorial Park in downtown Garapan.

Registration is open at www.raceroster.com and is $110 for the full marathon and $80 for the half marathon, 10K, and 5K. Full marathon participants must be age 18 or older. Half marathon participants must be aged 14 or older. With valid photo ID, students ages 18 or younger may register for $60. Registration will close at 5pm ChST on March 7, 2024, and mandatory race packet pickup will be on March 8 from 4pm to 6pm at American Memorial Park Amphitheatre in Garapan, Saipan.

A new course highlighting iconic sites from the Marianas' rich history awaits full marathon runners. The road race will traverse sites from the various eras of Marianas history, including pre-history, the Spanish administration, the Japanese administration in the early 1900s, World War II, and modern history as a U.S. Commonwealth.

Cash prizes will be awarded for top finishers and by age division in the marathon. Participants will receive a Limited Edition Official Saipan Marathon T-shirt, official Saipan Marathon medal, Certificate of Completion and one entry to the awards banquet on March 9 at Hyatt Regency Saipan.

For more information, visit https://raceroster.com/events/2024/78587/saipan-marathon-2024 or www.mymarianas.com or contact MVA Community Projects Coordinator Ed Diaz at 1.670.664.3210 or ediaz@mymarianas.com. ***(MVA)***

MVA

Saipan Marathon 2024 on March 9, 2024, in the Marianas is a certified measured course of World Athletics in cooperation with AIMS.

MVA

A participant in Saipan Marathon gets festive with a wacky costume.

Quest remains undefeated in 2024 Rocball

At the end of round four with 20 games completed last week, teams are beginning to identify their strong points in the 2024 Rocball League played at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Quest remains undefeated with a squeaky clean 4-0 win-loss record followed by Spicey Locals and Bolley Ballerz with identical 3-1 records each. Nesian Power, Border Control, and Aces are all 2-2, while Baddie-Z is all in its its lonesome at 1-3 with Chagii Fahn and Rizzlers yet to win and at the cellar with 0-4 slates apiece.

The teams with the best servers are Quest and Border Control with 30 two-point aces each. The teams with the best penalty point serves called xunks are Topshakaz and Spicey Locals with four each. The only team that has been able to jam a served ball is the Bolley Ballerz. The team with the best backcourt two-point plays is Border Control with three kees. And the team that has scored the most three-oint plays is Border Control with 10 goals.

The top players of Rocball's multiple-point scoring system are Miguel Castro of Rizzlers with 10 aces, Yeshiah Coleman of Topshakaz with three xunks, Mokyang Kim of the Bolley Ballerz with one jam, Anciado Reineer of the Rizzlers with two kees, and Jerome Manzon of Baddie Z with four goals. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Quest is undefeated after 20 games in the 2024 Rocball League at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Rocball players defending goal against the serve. Rocball players are not allowed to catch a ball to prevent a goal from being scored.

LUCKY

From page 20

Tournament and the rest are the following with their net score average in parenthesis: July winner Edgar Abalos (74.5); December winner Adony Matutino (76.5); October winner Das Krishnan (77); January winner Dan Ganacias (78.5); August winner Albert Pajarillaga (78.5); September winner Ronnie Santos (82.5), and March winner Tony Cabrera (83). February winner Hak Chon Bae and April winner Emil Padernal only played on the first round.

During the awards ceremony, Fil-Taga president Cabrera congratulated all the winners of the season-ending tournament. He also shared how his close relationship with his Filipino stepfather was a big influence in him joining the club.

The awards ceremony also saw all monthly winners awarded their monthly trophy.

In the concurrent January Ace of the Month Tournament, Palikkun also took the plum with his aforementioned net 70. Second place went to Cataluna with his net 74 and Suda was third with his net 75.

MARK RABAGO

Fil-Taga monthly champions pose for a group photo during the 2023 Ace of Aces Tournament awards ceremony last Jan. 27 at the Lucky Bill's Restaurant in Garapan.

BATALLONES

From page 20

Maria is so amazing."

He added that he has been training Batallones hard. He said, "I saw her crying in the pool several times because the workouts are very tough and painful. People easily say, 'Hard work pays off". However, was it hard work? It is not a decision made by the person himself or herself, but is expressed by the results. Maria has worked harder than any CNMI female swimmers before her, which is why she was able to reach a time that no one else had reached in 40 years."

Fellow national team swimmer Isaiah Aleksenko's races in the 200m butterfly and 200m individual medley have not started yet as of press time.

Both Batallones and Aleksenko are joined by head coach Kimura and Northern Marianas Swimming Federation representative Richard Sikkel.

Batallones and Aleksenko topped the selection process for the two slots available for the 2024 World Aquatics Championships. All CNMI swimmers that participated in the 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara were eligible and Aleksenko and Batallones earned the most FINA points (average of Top 3 events) with 700 points and 531 points, respectively.

WSR

From page 20

of five wins. They first won a tough matchup against Saipan Community School, 25-23; edged BSS, 21-16; and brought down Koblerville Elementary School II, 21-5.

The Blue Marlins are made up of Gregorio Repeki, Jason Kaipat, Napu Reyes, K-mani Dela Cruz, Raymond Palacios, Samuel Ngiraked, Celina Gonzales, Dakota Ilek, Hailey Mafnas, Destiny Cosmes, and Shiana Pua.

In other results that day, KobES II won via forfeit over Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School I; Garapan Elementary School II defeated BSS, 21-6; San Vicente Elementary School I outlasted Mount Carmel School, 21-14; GES II slipped past SIS II, 21-19; SCS I notched a win against BSS, 21-14; and KagES I tore down KobES II, 21-5.

This Friday is the last day of round-robin games, with the championship series set to start on Friday, Feb. 23, and Saturday, Feb. 24.

Wembanyama posts 1st triple-double as Spurs beat Raptors.

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

3 sponsor Wacky Awards at Saipan Marathon.

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Batallones swims to new 100m breaststroke records

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

National swimmer Maria Batallones swam to a new CNMI national record and the 15- to 16-year-old age group record in the 100m breaststroke during the 2024 World Aquatics Championships held in Doha, Qatar last Monday.

With her time of 1:19.79, she beat a long-standing 24-year national record time of 1:20.69 that was set by Xenavee Pangelinan in March 30, 2000.

Batallones also improved upon the record she set last November in the 15-16-year-old age group, which was 1:20.86.

The 15-year-old Marianas High School student-athlete was in Heat 1 of the race and placed eighth with her time of 1:19.79, while she placed 48th overall.

She said during her race, she kept in mind what her former teammate Juhn Tenorio told her. "I spoke to him the night before my race, and he gave me really great advice that stuck to me throughout the race. So I would say he really helped me through this race."

When she saw her time on display after her race, Batallones said, "nothing felt better than seeing my time on the big screen. I was really overwhelmed with joy. It felt like all the time I spent training was worth it."

She dedicated her accomplishment to her parents who always believe in her, her friends who are understanding, and her teammates for their continuous support. She added, "Of course, my coach [Hiroyuki Kimura] and Ms. Yuko [Kimura] who are always there for the team."

As for how it's going so far in the Middle East, she said, "Doha so far is really beautiful, definitely very different from Saipan. It's also pretty cold here. Overall we're doing fine!"

Head coach Hiroyuki Kimura was excited about Batallones' record-breaking swim. He exclaimed, "We finally broke [the] 1-minute 20-second barrier in [the] female 100m breaststroke! In CNMI swimming history, there were a lot of female breastsroker, but no one reached 1:19. Maria is still 15 years old! Usually, the national record time is made either by a 17- or 18-year-old swimmer, therefore, this national record set by

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Maria Batallones in action during her competition in the 100m breaststroke in which she broke the CNMI national and 15-16 age group record last Monday held in Doha, Qatar.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Maria Batallones is all smiles in the pool in Doha, Qatar where she competed in the 100m breastsroke. She broke a 24-year CNMI national record and 15-16-year-old age group record with her time of 1:19.79 last Monday.

WSR I, KagES II undefeated in co-ed vball

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

William S. Reyes Elementary School I and Kagman Elementary School II teams racked up wins and are undefeated after their Week 3 round-robin matchup in the NMIVA-PSS Co-ed Elementary School Volleyball Tournament 2023-2024 at the Oleai Sports Complex last Friday.

The Kingfishers first flew high against Saipan International School II, 21-5, then shut down Saipan Community School I, 21-2, and wrapped up the day with a win over Garapan Elementary School II, 21-12. They are undefeated with five wins.

Their roster was made up of Dulynna Simina, Trisha Lisua, Memzie Eliesiar, Haven Moteisou, Atsun Hallito, Elijah Pelisamen, Jesus Daikichy, Salmon Kamal, Cinarae Martino, Arys Cepeda, Kson Martino, James Bowie, and Chris Paul.

From the east side, the Blue Marlins also collected three wins for an undefeated record

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LEIGH GASES

William S. Reyes Elementary School II poses for a photo before a game in the NMIVA-PSS Co-ed Elementary School Volleyball Tournament 2023-2024 at the Oleai Sports Complex last Feb. 9.

'Lucky' Palikkun tops Ace of Aces tourney

By MARK RABAGO
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EDITOR

Tom Palikkun made his home island of Kosrae proud by winning the season-ending 2023 Fil-Taga Golfers Association Ace of Aces Tournament held last Jan. 13 and 27.

The 62-year-old retired longtime golf course staff followed up his net score of 71 on Day 1 of the tourney at the Coral Ocean Resort with an even better net 70 on Day 2 at the LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort west course.

Palikkun, the November winner, wound up with a two-day net total of 141 for a net average of 70.5 to edge June alternate Burt Suda, who was three strokes behind with his 144 net total, good for an average of 72. May winner Freddie Cataluna completed the Top 3 with his 148 net that included a superb net 68 on Day 2.

Palikkun downplayed his win and attributed his championship in the 2023 Fil-Taga Ace of Aces to plain old luck.

"Actually, today was all luck. It was all luck considering that in the first nine the wind and the rain was a big factor. The wind was strong so I was struggling on the first nine...I was just trying to stay on the fairway as much as I could. On the back nine, the weather was fantastic so I was able to play a little better," he said after the awards ceremony at Lucky Bill's Restaurant in Garapan on the evening after the second round.

He said his victory on Day 2 also came despite him not really being a good player on the west course.

"I struggle a bit [on the west course]. I'd say today it was just pure luck," he said.

Palikkun then went on to dedicate his win to all Fil-Taga members.

"I feel so privileged to be part of this organization. I've known the members and their families for a long time. I just went there to have fun and whatever happens I was going to accept the outcome. You have to remember, there's a lot of them in this group that play a lot better than me—Freddie, William [Retardo], Dan [Ganacias]. Today was just one of these days that I got lucky."

A total of 10 Fil-Taga members took part in the two-day 2023 Fil-Taga Ace of Aces

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MARK RABAGO

Tom Palikkun, 2023 Fil-Taga Golfers Association Ace of Aces Tournament, poses with Fil-Taga president Tony Cabrera, left, and 2023 Ace of Aces Tournament awards ceremony emcee Mike Cruz, right.